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The Exile and the Restoration

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THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION.

BY

REV. A. B. DAVIDSON, D.D., LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND OLD TESTAMENT EXEGESIS, NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

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THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

CHAPTER I

THE DOWNFALL OF THE STATE

1. **JOSIAH** (2 Kings xxiii. 29 ff.).—In the last quarter of the seventh century B.C. the empire of the Assyrians was tottering to its fall. Babylon had secured virtual independence in 625, and the provinces west of the Euphrates, Syria and Palestine, feeling the grasp of Nineveh relaxed, had begun to act as if independent also. Josiah, in pursuance of his religious reformation, had not hesitated to overstep the limits of Judah and extend his authority over the ancient kingdom of Israel, not only in the neighbouring cities of Bethel and Samaria (2 Kings xxiii. 17), but as far north as Naphthali (2 Chron. xxxiv. 6-33). Egypt, the old rival of Assyria, was at this time governed by Pharaoh Necho (609-595), an ambitious and able ruler, who maintained fleets both in the Mediterranean and Red Sea, and under whose auspices the circumnavigation of Africa was undertaken and accomplished by Phœnician sailors (Her. iv. 42). Necho deemed that the

moment had come for asserting the ancient claims of Egypt to rule over Syria:—"He went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates" (2 Kings xxiii. 29). He had probably marched up the coast and was pursuing the great military road that led to the Euphrates, when Josiah, at the head of an army, confronted him at Megiddo, in the plain of Esdraelon. Though Josiah was animated by zeal for the pure worship of Jehovah in all his reforms, and in his efforts to extend them over Israel, politics and religion could hardly be separated in that age. His dream was probably to bring back the scattered remains of the northern kingdom to a pure worship, and to unite the whole people of Israel under the sceptre of the house of David, and he was not inclined to allow Egypt to cross his aspirations, and rob him of the inheritance which was falling to him from the dead hand of Assyria. It was, perhaps, a foolhardy thing to measure himself and his little army against the forces of the empire of the Nile. The enterprise cost him his life, and his kingdom its independence (B.C. 608).

2. JEHOAHAZ (2 Kings xxiii. 31 ff.).—Josiah's servants carried his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem, where he was buried, and the people of the land raised his son Jehoahaz to the throne. The prince, induced or compelled to repair to Necho's headquarters at Riblah on the Orontes, was thrown into fetters, and, after a reign of three months, carried by Pharaoh to Egypt, where he died. Necho set his brother Eliakim on the throne, changing his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz, though the younger, appears to have been the favourite of the people,

who perhaps read instinctively the character of his elder brother, and the fate of the young prince deeply touched the heart of the country. More than one writer refers to it in sympathetic words. Speaking of his father Josiah and him, Jeremiah says (xxii. 10) :—"Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more nor see his native land." And Ezekiel in his elegy on Judah and her princes, under the symbol of a lioness robbed of her whelps one after another, says of him (xix. 2-4) :—

How was thy mother a lioness—among the lions!
In the midst of young lions she couched—she reared her whelps.
And she brought up one of her whelps—he grew a young lion;
And he learned to catch the prey—he devoured men.
But the nations sent out a cry against him—he was taken in their pit;
And they brought him with hooks—unto the land of Egypt.

3. BATTLE OF CARCHEMISH (Jer. xlvi.).—Assyria was now completely prostrate, the Medes sitting before the capital. The provinces being denuded of troops, there was no force in the field to resist the Pharaoh, who probably overran all the countries west of the Euphrates and brought them under the sway of Egypt. Meantime Nineveh fell (608-6), and the two allies agreed to divide her territories between them. The eastern provinces fell to the Medes, the western, including all the countries washed by the Mediterranean, to Babylon. A new claimant had thus arisen to the realm just added by Pharaoh to his dominions. A conflict between the

rivals could not long be deferred. In 605-4 the two armies met each other near Carchemish, at the fords of the Euphrates, where Nebuchadnezzar, at the head of his father's troops, inflicted on Egypt a crushing defeat. Necho had to evacuate Syria and retire to Egypt, though it was not till two or three years later that Nebuchadnezzar was able to appear before Jerusalem, where he received the homage of Jehoiakim.*

The Reign of Jehoiakim.

4. JEREMIAH AND JOSIAH'S REFORM (Jer. vii.).—Josiah's death was more than a calamity, it was a religious enigma. However superficial men's reflections might be, they could not help reflecting, and the tragedy of Megiddo bewildered them. Josiah had reigned in the fear of the Lord; he had cleansed the temple of its abominations, and purified the land from all its idols and high places. Judah had returned to the pure worship of Jehovah, and they trusted in His protection. And history had confirmed their hopes. For twelve years His face had shone on them, and He had given them peace. The new calamity staggered them. Could it be, some asked, that the gods of the nations were stronger than He? Others laid the flattering unction to their soul that they were expiating not their own sins but those of a former generation: "The fathers ate sour grapes,

* It is possible that Necho as he retreated captured Gaza, with the view of throwing that strong fortress in the way of Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. xlvii. 1. The reference to Gaza, however, is wanting in LXX.

and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. xxxi. 29). But perhaps the majority continued to pride themselves upon their reforms, and clasped to their hearts their merits before Jehovah, assured that His face was hidden but for a moment, and that a brighter day would shortly dawn. "Jerusalem," they said, "was the place where men ought to worship. The Lord was in His holy temple, and it was inviolable—the temple of the Lord! the temple of the Lord are these" (Jer. vii. 4). The true prophets of the Lord alone held in their hand a clue which guided them through all the perplexities of the time. It was the old prophetic principle that the calamities of the land were due to the people's sins, to their moral declension. Jeremiah had never been greatly edified by Josiah's reforms, and cherished no illusions in regard to them. It was an attempt, he said, to work the old field, rank with thorns. They must have new ground: "Break up a new soil, and sow not among thorns." The soil he thought of was the heart—"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart" (iv. 3-4). Thus saith the Lord: "Amend your ways and your doings; if ye execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land which I gave to your fathers" (vii .3 ff.). Their trust in the Temple, and Jehovah's protecting presence there, was trust in a lie. The Lord would lay His Temple even with the ground, as He did to His former place at

Shiloh. The temple had become to them what their cave was to robbers, a place of refuge where they fled after committing their deeds of violence and blood—"Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and then come and stand before Me in My house, and say, 'We are safe!'" Their reforms had only plunged them into deeper delusions. *

5. RELIGION UNDER THE PRINCES OF JOSIAH'S HOUSE.—The reforms of Josiah had been imposed by authority; they were not the effect of a rising tide of conviction in the hearts of the people generally. If many rejoiced in them, the mass merely acquiesced. Men were transformed in their practices, not yet in the spirit of their minds. Profound and lasting as the influence of Deuteronomy, the newly-discovered Law, proved itself to be, the twelve years that had elapsed since its publication were too short to leaven the heart of the masses with its principles or make them forget the fascinations of their former practices. Apart from the glowing spirit of philanthropy which breathes through it, the aim of Deuteronomy was altogether religious — to secure the worship of Jehovah alone, purified from all heathen corruptions. Its law that sacrifice should be offered only at Jerusalem was no more than a means, an education and necessity for the great object aimed at. Deuteronomy is summed up in the words: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine

* Jer. vii. belongs to the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Ch. xxvi. is the historical commentary to it.

heart" (vi. 4). No loftier ideal was ever set before a people, but the very purity of the ideal placed it beyond the grasp of many. A continuous administration of the law for a period of time might have educated the people into true conceptions of God, but the continuity was broken by the death of Josiah, and his successor Jehoiakim was engrossed by quite other interests. His ambition was to build himself stately palaces, which, with an empty treasury, had to be reared by the forced labour of his subjects (Jer. xxii. 13). Left without a hand to guide them the people were like sheep gone astray, and turned every one to his own way. The law of Deuteronomy, no longer upheld, fell into abeyance, and the religious disorders, prior to the time of Josiah, though not in all their aggravations, returned.* The repeated political humiliations paralysed the national spirit, and the paralysis extended itself to the people's religion and even to its morals. The nationality was exhausted; it could no more put forth out of itself a saviour to retrieve its fortunes—"of all the children Zion had brought forth there was none to guide her, none to take her by the hand, of all the sons she had brought up" (Is. li. 18; lxiii. 5; Ezek. xxii. 30). And the national exhaustion was accompanied by religious decay, for in all the history of Israel a full tide of national life and a high faith

* The prophets regard the nation as a moral person, the same all through its history, and the application of their words to particular periods must be made with caution. The following passages, spoken at least after the death of Josiah, may be referred to: Jer. vii. 17, 30 ff.; viii. 2; xi. 10, 12; xiii. 10, 27; xvii. 1 ff.; xviii. 15; xix. 4 13; xxii. 9; xxv. 6; xxxii. 29-35. Ezek. vi. 4; viii. 3 ff.; xxiii. 38.

in Jehovah were always the counterparts of one another.

(1) *Two religions of Jehovah.*—It is not quite easy to gain a just conception of the religious condition of this time, or indeed of any time in the history of Israel. The traditional idea that Israel was perpetually falling into the worship of other gods than Jehovah is hardly correct. To understand the condition of religious thought among the people we must go back to the beginning of the nation's history. The people, on entering Palestine, did not drive out the Canaanites or exterminate them; they settled down beside them in many places (Judges i. 27-36), and virtually absorbed them. The Canaanites became Israelites. But in becoming Israelites the native populations could not but carry over into the life and thought of Israel much of their own debased religion and morals. Further, the tribes of Israel, in their isolation from one another and distance from the central sanctuary, found places of worship ready to their hand in the native *high-places.* These they adopted as sanctuaries of Jehovah worship. It is proof of the vigour of the Jehovah religion that it did not succumb before the worship of the native Baals. The Israelites, except in isolated localities, did not become worshippers of Baal; the Canaanites became worshippers of Jehovah. It could not but be that a religion of Jehovah would thus arise which was debased by many Canaanitish elements. Two religions of Jehovah thus existed side by side, a higher and a lower; the pure religion of Mosaic Israel, and the debased religion arising through

amalgamation with the native population. In the latter there was an assimilation of the worship of Jehovah to the native worship, and consequently an obscuration of the lofty ethical conception of the God of Israel, who sank down nearly to the level of a nature-god, whose office was to give the people "their bread and water, their wool and flax, their oil and their drinks" (Hos. ii. 5). The conception which masses of the people had of Jehovah was one which He could not recognise as the conception of *Him;* hence He says in Amos v. 5, "Seek Me, and seek not unto Bethel." Ostensibly and in name the people worshipped Jehovah, but the conception they had of Him and the service they rendered Him were proper rather to Baal. Nevertheless the ancient Mosaic conception of the God of Israel and knowledge of Him still lived. It animated the prophets, and no doubt many more in all ages. The prophets in seeking to inspire men with a purer idea of God, are all conscious that they are no innovators. They stand on the old paths. Jehovah as they conceive Him is the historical God of Israel (Hos. xiii. 4). It is the people who have changed (Is. i. 4; Jer. ii. 5-8).

Thus a conscious antagonism between two parties pervades the history of Israel, and fills the pages of all the prophets. It is an antagonism between two conceptions of Jehovah, and two ways of serving Him. It was not till Hezekiah that the prophetic party proceeded to active measures against the heathenism that had infected the Jehovah worship. This monarch, under the influence of Isaiah, removed at least images from the land. But his

reform was quenched in blood by the counter reform and persecution of Manasseh. Manasseh was dead but a few years when the puritan party were again in the ascendant, and Josiah completed what Hezekiah had begun, sweeping away both idols and high places and every vestige of heathenism. Again the good work was arrested by the fatal field of Megiddo, on which Josiah fell. The princes of his house did not follow in his steps. The Book of Kings says of them all that "they did evil," which means that they did not do good, in other words, were not active reformers like their father. In religion they pursued the policy of *laissez-faire*, under which every man did that which was right in his own eyes. They were, however, all worshippers of Jehovah, God of Israel; the names they bore or assumed are all compounded with His name. No doubt it was the old traditional service of Him that they favoured, as it had been practised by Israel on the high places from time immemorial.

(2) *Some Eastern Idolatries.*—With low conceptions of the nature of Jehovah, such as were common to too many of the people, the reception of other gods along with Him would be easy. In the declining stages of the kingdom of Judah various Eastern idolatries prevailed. For a hundred years Judah had been a vassal state, first of Assyria and then of Babylon, and the influence of the suzerain empire could not but make itself felt. Ahaz was proud to possess an altar of Assyrian pattern, on the like of which the Great King himself sacrificed (2 Kings xvi. 10; cf. Isaiah ii. 6, Zeph. i. 8). And in the last years of the kingdom

objects of worship are often alluded to not once mentioned in earlier times, such as the sun and moon and the "host of heaven," that is, not the starry firmament as a whole, but certain stars, whether planetary or fixed. In particular, the women were devoted to the worship of the "queen of heaven," probably the planet Venus as an evening star, whose service was an offering of cakes, possibly dough images of the goddess (Jer. vii. 17, 18; xliv. 7). Far away on the Chebar Ezekiel saw in his visions "the women weeping for Tammuz" at the entrance of the temple. Tammuz or Adonis was the sun-god, whose death before the touch of winter was commemorated yearly with wailings. It is only the sorrowful side of the rite that the prophet refers to; it reflected the gloom and the sinking life of the time. The age was not irreligious, rather the reverse. Amidst the dissolution and decay around them men spread out their hands and appealed to everything that bore the name of god. A sombre and sanguinary earnestness had taken possession of their mind, and they were ready to devote to heaven all that the human heart holds dearest, "to give their first-born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their souls" (Micah vi. 7). The sacrifice of children, a dreadful rite resorted to by the Canaanites only in the extremest trials (2 Kings iii. 27), became not uncommon in Israel. With all this, however, Jehovah continued to be the God of Israel. Indeed their trust in Him rose in the closing years of the state to be a fanaticism.

6. JEREMIAH'S FIRST EDITION (Ch. xxxvi.). —The politicians were too short-sighted to per-

ceive the far-off issues of the Babylonian victory at Carchemish. A vague alarm, perhaps, took possession of them, an indistinct foreboding of the possible consequences, and they sought to secure themselves by solemn fasts and redoubled diligence in worship (Jer. xxxvi. 6-9). Only the eye of the prophets of the Lord took in all the developments of that momentous battlefield. It was an epoch in Jeremiah's life. Like all the true prophets he never swerved from the conviction that the days of his country were numbered. And from the beginning he had a presentiment that the instrument of Jehovah's wrath would come from the North, the teeming womb of populations (iv. 6, ff.). But it was Carchemish that, like a flash of lightning in the darkness, lighted up to him the whole line of God's purposes with his people on to the end. The foe from the north, of his earlier visions, he now perceived to be Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. He was the "servant" whom the Lord had commissioned to execute His judgment on His people (xxv. 9). But the clearer and the more near the end of his people appeared to his prophetic mind to be, the more his heart struggled against it. The old agitations of former days returned (iv. 19). His love for his country wrestled with its destiny. He could not resign it to its fate. Surely if all the Lord's words to him were rehearsed to the people they would even yet give heed to them and their doom be averted (xxxvi. 2, 3). Calling Baruch to him he dictated an outline of all that he had spoken from the beginning over more than twenty years; and,

being from some reason precluded from entering the temple himself, he enjoined Baruch to read the roll in the ears of the people. The reading took place next year (603) during a fast when Jerusalem was filled with strangers from all the country round about. How many laid the prophet's words to heart cannot be known ; but one who was present reported the occurrence to the princes, who were sitting together in one of the chambers of the temple. The princes thought the matter of such gravity that they must communicate it to the king, and meantime they cautioned Baruch and the prophet to hide themselves. The story of the king and the roll is familiar. Sitting in his winter house (it was December) with a brasier of coals before him, and surrounded by the princes, he ordered Jehudi to read the roll, and every three or four leaves (or columns) that Jehudi read he cut them out with a penknife and flung them upon the fire till the whole roll was consumed on the coals in the brasier. The prophet's charges of sin and declension and general threats of judgment were possibly not unfamiliar to the king, and he showed his contempt for them by flinging the writing into the fire. But toward the end the roll contained the specific threat that Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy the land, and cause man and beast to cease from it (xxxvi. 29, with xxv. 9, 10). This threat exasperated the king, and he ordered Baruch and Jeremiah to be arrested. Their fate would certainly have been that of Urijah (xxvi. 20 ff.) had they been found. But the historian adds, "The Lord hid them." Jeremiah made use of his en-

forced seclusion to dictate anew to Baruch all the words of the roll which Jehoiakim had burned, "and there were added unto them besides many like words." This second roll became the basis of our present Book of Jeremiah.*

7. JEHOIAKIM'S REVOLT.—Jehoiakim was a ruler who would have brought even a strong state to the brink of ruin. Frivolous and superficial in regard to the highest things of life, at a time when, if ever, serious thoughtfulness was required; despotic in temper, and brutal in the measures he used to rid himself of those who crossed his humours (Jer. xxvi. 20-24), he became the detestation and contempt of all serious-minded men. Jeremiah probably reflects the common sentiment regarding him when he says, "They shall not lament him, saying, Ah my brother! Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (xxii. 18, 19). The words may be a prediction, but they are as much an execration, consigning him to the end that befitted him.

Jehoiakim observed his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar for three years, when he refused his yearly tribute, an act equivalent to a declaration of independence. Egypt, as of old, was pulling the strings, and the prince, too wilful calmly to weigh the risks he was incurring, followed the impulses of his own pretentious egotism (Jer. xxii. 17). A century earlier Hezekiah had committed himself

* The last words of Ch. xxxvi. might mean, "and there were added unto them besides words as numerous as they." According to this rendering the second roll would be twice as large as the first.

to the same rash enterprise against Assyria that Jehoiakim now entered upon against Babylon, but it was with more foresight. Hezekiah had secured a coalition on his side of all the states around; apart from Egypt Jehoiakim stood alone. The neighbouring peoples, Syria, Moab and Ammon, maintained their allegiance to Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar contented himself at first with letting them loose upon Judah. Meanwhile Egypt, having made the first move in the game, left it as usual to be played out by those who had staked more deeply. Necho either retreated voluntarily, or the petty nationalities just mentioned were strong enough to drive him out of Palestine, to which he no more returned (2 Kings xxiv. 7). The reckoning, however, had been incurred, and the score would have to be cleared. In 597, Nebuchadnezzar and his army sat before the walls of Jerusalem. But death had overtaken Jehoiakim, and his account had to be met by another.*

8. JEHOIACHIN. THE FIRST CAPTIVITY (2 Kings xxiv. 8 ff.).—Jehoiachin, called also Jeconiah and Coniah, succeeded his father at the age of eighteen (2 Kings xxiv. 8 †). After a reign of about three

* The circumstances of Jehoiakim's death are obscure. Jeremiah's words (xxii. 19) might be regarded as merely a contumelious threat, were it not that they are repeated in the historical narrative (xxxvi. 30). It has been suggested that Jehoiakim, having gone out to the Chaldean camp to treat, may have been treacherously cut down, and his body left for a time without sepulture. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6 says that Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters, while 2 Kings xxiv. 6 says that he slept with his fathers. LXX (translating from a Hebrew original) adds that he was buried with his fathers in the garden of Uzza (cf. 2 Kings xxi. 18-26).

† The 8 of 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9 is no doubt a textual error.

months, he was compelled to go forth to the king of Babylon, and surrender unconditionally—he and his mother, his servants and princes, and the officers of his house. He was carried to Babylon, where he lay in prison seven and thirty years, till Evil Merodach, the successor of Nebuchadnezzar, released him and showed him much consideration (2 Kings xxv. 27-30). His fate awoke the liveliest sorrow in his people's mind. Jeremiah's frequent allusions to him show how much he was in men's thoughts. The people shrank from the contemplation of a young life so fatally blighted; they could not resign themselves to the thought that his exile was irrevocable (Jer. xxviii. 4). The prophet had to crush their hopes of his return in the most peremptory way: "As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah were the signet ring upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence. And I will cast thee and thy mother that bare thee into another country, and there shall ye die" (xxii. 24-30; cf. xiii. 18). Ezekiel, who shared Jehoiachin's captivity, is equally full of sympathy. He regards him, indeed, as the last legitimate ruler of Judah, for the Judah that remained no more deserved the name—its piety and worth had gone into captivity; and there is a quaver of pathos in the prophet's own tones when he speaks of the young lion's voice being no more heard on the mountains of Israel (xix. 5-9). It appears from Josephus * that Jehoiachin's voluntary surrender was looked on as an act of self-sacrifice to save the city and temple from the fate which a few years later overtook them, and for this reason

* Bell. Jud. vi. ii. 1.

his name was held by his people in undying remembrance. And in modern times a new halo has been thrown around his head by Ewald, who fancies him to be the poet who, pining in exile, pours out his plaintive sorrows in Psalms xlii. and lxxxiv.

The measures adopted by Nebuchadnezzar were sufficiently harsh. In order to indemnify himself for the charges of the campaign, he seized all the treasures of the king's house, and all the treasures of the house of the Lord, as well as many of the costly vessels of the sanctuary, and stripped the temple of all the precious metals with which it was adorned. And to break the spirit and strength of the people, he continued the cruel policy of the kings of Assyria and transported the flower of the nation to Babylon. Among the captives were many of the higher priesthood, and the chief men in Jerusalem. One large colony, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel, was planted at Tel Abib on the river Chebar, probably a canal or confluent of the Euphrates, not far from Babylon. But the sentence of exile fell most heavily on the "men of might," *i.e.*, the men of substance, the ground owners, who were the backbone of the country and furnished the fighting men of the army. These were deported to the number of 7000, besides craftsmen and smiths 1000. In all, 10,000 were carried away. Such numbers refer perhaps exclusively to men; if their families accompanied them, as in many cases they may have done, the numbers would be very much greater. But much distress was occasioned by families being torn asunder, the heads being transported to Babylon, while the children were left behind.

The Reign of Zedekiah.

9. **THE PEOPLE LEFT BEHIND.**—Nebuchadnezzar set upon the throne Mattaniah, son of Josiah and full brother of the unfortunate Jehoahaz (2 Kings xxiii. 31, with xxiv. 18). The new ruler assumed the name of Zedekiah, and occupied the throne eleven years (597-586). The temper of those he had to govern required a firmer hand than his to moderate and guide it. The cruel measures of the king of Babylon had roused a passion of exasperation and resentment, amidst which the voice of reason and political prudence had no chance of making itself heard. The intellect and worth of the nation had gone into exile, the cooler heads, the men of experience and moderation, and those who had some training in political affairs—"none remained save the poorest sort of people in the land" (2 Kings xxiv. 14). A lower and more democratic stratum rose to the surface, filled the offices of State, and became the counsellors, or, as might be more justly said, the masters of the king (Jer. xxxviii. 5). In character, too, these men fell below those who had been carried away. They were less instructed in the true religion, and less inclined to listen to the voice of the prophets of the Lord, or less able to distinguish the true prophets from the false (Jer. v. 4-5). In a vision Jeremiah was shown two baskets of figs, "one basket had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad" (Jer. xxiv.). The good figs were the people who had gone into exile, the bad those left

in Jerusalem and the country. Ezekiel also paints those left behind in the darkest colours (xiv. 21-23)

10. POLITICAL RESTLESSNESS (Jer. xxvii., xxix.).—The provinces in the Empires of Assyria and Babylon were never welded together so as to form a homogeneous and cohesive State like Great Britain or France. The subject peoples formed a part of the empire only in the sense that they paid tribute. They were usually left to be ruled by their native princes on condition that these did homage to Babylon. The consequence was that the subject nations were constantly plotting to cast off the yoke and regain their independence. Whenever the over-lord died, or when he was involved in dangerous complications in remote parts of the empire, the opportunity was seized to raise the standard of rebellion. Early in the reign of Zedekiah an epidemic of revolt ran through all the States west of the Euphrates. Envoys from Edom, Moab and Ammon, and the Phœnician States appeared in Jerusalem to solicit the adhesion of Zedekiah to the new confederacy (Jer. xxvii.) Even the exiles in Babylon, who, of course, were in constant communication with their brethren in the west, seem to have felt the influence of the movement, and shown symptoms of restlessness (Jer. xxix.) Jeremiah, who had predicted for the Babylonian empire a duration of two generations, strenuously opposed such mad enterprises, and happily for the time his voice was heard. Wiser counsels prevailed with the king, and Judah remained quiet. The movements, whether in Judah or Babylon, did not escape Nebuchadnezzar. and an

embassy from Zedekiah had to proceed to Babylon to remove the king's suspicions (Jer. xxix. 3). Its success was probably not complete, for a little later Zedekiah himself appears to have gone to the East to assure Nebuchadnezzar of his fidelity, and renew his oath of allegiance in person (Jer. li. 59). Jeremiah predicts a terrible retribution on the prophets who had fomented disaffection among the exiles, saying that people will use their fate in uttering a curse: "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom Nebuchadnezzar roasted in the fire!" (xxix. 22). The prophet himself took advantage of the embassy from Jerusalem to send a letter to the captives, exhorting them to consider Babylon their home for a long time to come, to become quiet and busy citizens, and to pray for the peace of the country which gave them shelter, for in its peace lay their own (Jer. xxix.).

11. THE FALSE PROPHETS.—The headstrong and fanatical temper of the people still left in the land was inflamed by their religious leaders, the persons whom we call "false prophets." Scripture does not use the expression, though it says that they prophesied "lies," and spoke "out of their own heart." It strikes us now as strange that there should be persons of this sort. The phenomenon of prophecy was such a unique one that we might think there was little room for confusing the true prophecy with anything else, or for any one imagining himself to be a prophet who was not one. The scenes of Israel's life are so remote that our eye sees only one or two great figures, all else is reduced by distance to a level. We observe the

imposing figure of the prophet, but the elements and complications of the life that surrounded him we do not realise. He is to us a solitary, grand and supernatural person, and we cannot help imagining him the same imposing figure to his contemporaries, and we wonder that they should ever have disobeyed his voice, or that anything like a counterfeit to him should ever have appeared. But if we would consider the religious conditions of our own time or of any time, particularly the times of our Lord and the attitude of men to Him, our wonder would be lessened. In ancient Israel there was a life as various as our own. There were mysteries then as now. Men were perplexed by opposing probabilities as they are still. People believed that there was a divine voice among them, but it did not speak directly but through the voice of men, and there was room to doubt whether the particular voice of man was God's, or when competing voices were heard, which was His. They had no criterion by which to decide. From the nature of the case an external criterion was impossible, they had to bring the standard with them in their own minds—"he that is of the truth heareth my voice." Many passages reveal the condition in which the people found themselves. In Jer. xviii. 18, they say: "Come and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, for the law shall not fail from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Let us not give heed to any of his words." Here we see that the people believed in prophecy and in their prophets, but Jeremiah, who contradicted these prophets, they rejected. Even more instructive is

the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah before a concourse of the people over the duration of the captivity (Jer. xxviii.). The former prophet said it would last two generations; Hananiah predicted that in two years the exiles would return with Jehoiachin at their head. The people gave their voices for Hananiah, and for the time Jeremiah was put to silence.

False prophets are defined to be those by whom the Lord did not speak—and the definition is always true. There is, however, a truth in the other way of putting it: The Lord did not speak by such men because they were false prophets. Prophecy whether true or false had its roots in religion, in the historical faith of the people. In § 5 reference was made to two religions, two opposing conceptions, of Jehovah. Broadly speaking, the two classes of prophets, true and false, were the spokesmen of these two conceptions. The false prophets, from the first time we hear of them (1 Kings xxii.) to the latest, cherish the same conception of the God of Israel that the mass of the people had in the days of Amos (Ch. v. 18). That conception was that Jehovah was the national God of Israel, indissolubly allied to this people, whom therefore He must interpose to protect. They laid great stress on His power, little if any on His moral Being, and consequently little on the moral condition of the people. Hence their optimism; they saw nothing alarming in the social state of the people, and they preached peace and speedy termination of the exile. The true prophets, on the other hand, had their minds filled with the con-

ception of the moral Being of Jehovah, of His righteousness; and this idea at once cut asunder the bonds between Him and Israel as a nation As a mere nationality, Israel was nothing to Him, as He says in Amos ix. 7:—"Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?" He could be God only of a righteous nation. Thus the true prophets were all in a sense pessimists. Looking on the moral condition of the people, they could only prophesy disaster (Jer. xxviii. 8). The false prophets, standing on no higher religious level than the mass of the people, shared their aspirations, and were ever ready to second their projects. Ezekiel satirises this subserviency not without wit, when he says that the people build a jerry wall and the prophets set it out with whitewash (xiii. 10, 11). The source of false prophecy was an inadequate conception of the *ethical* nature of Jehovah.

12. KING ZEDEKIAH.—Zedekiah was a prince of good intentions, but weak and irresolute in character. Little is said of him prior to his revolt, but during the siege he appears on many occasions in a light far from unfavourable. In his secret heart he was on the side of the true prophets, and would have listened to their counsels had not terror of the stronger wills about him deterred him. He frequently consulted Jeremiah even when others were persecuting him, and he had been thrown into a dungeon by the priests and prophets and the war-party. On one occasion he sent to him, imploring his intercession with God:—"Pray now unto Jehovah our God for us" (xxxvii. 3); on another

he had him secretly to his own house to ask, "Is there any word from Jehovah?" (xxxvii. 17). Repeatedly he interposed to mitigate the rigours of the prophet's confinement, and when the famine became sore in the city, he took care that a loaf of bread should be given him daily out of the bakers' street (xxxvii. 21, cf. xxxviii. 8 ff.). It was also due to the king's pious or humane suggestion that the people released their slaves, according to the precept of the law (xxxiv. 8); though the hollowness of their piety immediately appeared, for the siege was no sooner raised, through the appearance of Hophra, than they turned and reduced their slaves to bondage again. The same evil types appear throughout all the history of Israel: the superficialness of the people's mind—"O Ephraim, what shall I do with thee, for your goodness is as a morning cloud!" (Hosea vi. 4)—and the feebleness of the monarchy. Even David, though anointed king, found the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him, and Zedekiah was cast in a gentler mould than David. He acknowledges his own helplessness (Jer. xxxviii. 5); and on one occasion, having sent for the prophet to consult him how he should act in regard to the siege, he condescends to beseech him to put a different face upon his visit should the princes happen to question him about it (Jer. xxxviii. 24-28). Had Zedekiah been equal to the situation; if he had been able to control and consolidate the forces of the State still remaining, Judah might have enjoyed a time of peace and prosperity. She might even have outlived the Chaldean empire, as she had survived that of Assyria. In the figures of Ezekiel, if she

could not aspire to be a cedar—an independent state—she might have been a prosperous spreading vine, and, though lowly, have filled the land (Ezek. xvii.). Jeremiah's kindly feelings to Zedekiah appear from his words to him in ch. xxxiv. 4, 5.

13. HIS REVOLT.—With such a ruler as Zedekiah, a toy in the hands of the more daring spirits about him, and with Egypt dangling prospects of independence before the people's eyes, revolt from Babylon was but a question of time. Ever since Isaiah prophesied that the fly from the rivers of Egypt and the bee from the land of Assyria would both come and settle down in the valleys of Judah (vii. 18), the pretentious power of the Nile valley had been the evil genius of Israel (Ezek. xxix. 16). At no time a match for the empire of the East, but always its jealous rival, it never ceased to stir the embers of discontent among the tributary states of Syria and Palestine. Boastful and lavish in its promises, it was always too inert and laggard or too weak to make them good. Its worth as an ally was already gauged by Isaiah, who gives it a nickname, which, though rather obscure, may perhaps be freely rendered Braggart Sitstill (xxx. 7).

The plans of the conspirators did not mature all at once. Ezekiel on the Chebar had time to hear of them, and directs a prophecy against "the men that devise mischief" (ch. xi.). These revolutionary spirits were not unaware of the risks they ran: "This city is the cauldron, and we be the flesh." With a certain grimness of humour they acknowledge that it will be hot for them, but the strong city will protect them as the pot protects the flesh

from the fire. Ezekiel tells them that the only flesh left in the pot will be the dead lying in the streets; the living will be pulled out and judged far away on the borders of Israel. At last the fatal step was taken by Zedekiah with only such slippery allies as the Ammonites, Egypt and Tyre. On moral grounds the king's disloyalty to Babylon was severely condemned by the prophets; it was more than falsehood to Nebuchadnezzar, it was breach of his covenant with Jehovah, by whom he had sworn (Ezek. xvii. 19). In truth the king could not help himself, he was borne like a waif upon the current. There was probably a peace party in the city, but its resistance was overborne by force and bloodshed (Ezek. ix. 9, xi. 6).

14. THE SIEGE (2 Kings xxv.; Jer. lii.).—Crossing the Euphrates, Nebuchadnezzar fixed his headquarters at Riblah, and sent a detachment under his generals to operate in the south. The anxiety among the exiles was almost as keen as in Jerusalem, and it was hoped that Ammon would be the first point of attack. This hope was disappointed. In his parabolic manner Ezekiel describes to them how he was commanded to grave a road, and at a point where it parted into two ways to set up finger-posts, one inscribed "To Rabbath Ammon," and the other "To Jerusalem." Arrived at the parting of the ways the king of Babylon has recourse to divination to ascertain the will of his gods: "He standeth at the head of the two ways, he shaketh the arrows, he consulteth the teraphim, he looketh into the liver. In his right hand is (*i.e.*, comes out) the lot 'Jerusalem'" (Ezek. xxi. 21).*

* See Ezekiel, *Cambridge Bible*, p. 150.

The Ammonites speedily took in the situation, and instead of opposing the lion they resolved to hunt like a pack of jackals, as they were, at his heels and secure some bones to gnaw of the prey which he took (Ezek. xxi. 28-32). All the petty states on the Jordan and the Sea turned against Jerusalem, and helped forward the evil in the day of her calamity (Ob. 10-14).

Jerusalem was invested by the Chaldeans on the tenth day of the tenth month of Zedekiah's ninth year, and a breach was effected and the city fell on the ninth day of the fourth month of his eleventh year (2 Kings xxv. 1-4). The siege thus lasted about a year and a half (January 587 to July 586), a period comparatively short, for Samaria had withstood the armies of Assyria for three years, and a little after this Tyre sustained a siege of thirteen years (585-573) by Nebuchadnezzar, who after all got no hire for his pains (Ezek. xxix. 17). Vigorous measures of defence were adopted (Jer. xxxiii. 4), and help was anxiously looked for from Egypt (Lam. iv. 17). Those suspected of a design to fall away to the Chaldeans were rigorously dealt with, although in spite of this many went forth to the enemy (Jer. xxxvii. 11-15, xxxviii. 19). The vacillation of the king was pitiable (§ 12). Only the prophets of the Lord, whether in the exile or at home, had a clear outlook and a consistent counsel to offer. The exiles crowded into Ezekiel's house to learn some tidings of the fate of the city, and he narrated to them his visions, all of which had one burden—Jerusalem was doomed. In one he saw a messenger of death scattering coals of fire over

the city; in another he seemed to himself to be a cowering fugitive digging through the city wall in the darkness that he might escape—a symbol of the king's attempted flight (ch. xii.). At home Jeremiah had only one answer to the king's importunate messages: either surrender, in which case life and peace; or resistance, with certain destruction and death.* To us now this judgment might seem mere common sense: Judah could not withstand the armies of Babylon. The prophet moved in another region than that of common sense, and there were some things in the history of Jerusalem staggering to common sense, such as its deliverance from the army of Sennacherib in the days of Hezekiah. The Lord could save by many or by few. The prophet's conviction was reached otherwise, but it was so immovable that he tells the people that, though they had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans and there remained but dead men, they would rise up every man in his tent and burn the city with fire (xxxvii. 10).

For once Egypt redeemed her pledge. An army under Hophra advanced from the south. The Chaldean troops broke up and marched to meet him, and the siege was raised. The jubilation within the city was great, and the danger being over, the fit of religion which it had occasioned passed away, and the people reduced to bondage again the slaves whom they had freed (Jer. xxxiv. 13 ff.). It is probable that an encounter took place between the two armies. Ezekiel, in a passage dated four months before the fall of the city, speaks

* Ch. xxi 3, xxxii. 1-5, 28 ff., xxxiv. 2, xxxvii. 17, xxxviii 17.

of Pharaoh's arm having been broken, so that it can no longer hold the sword (xxx. 20-26). At any rate, the Egyptians were flung back on their own land, and the siege was renewed.

But an enemy more formidable even than the Chaldeans now appeared. The affrighted country people had crowded for protection into the fenced cities, particularly into the capital, the strongest fortress in the land, and with the increased population famine began to be felt. The author of Lamentations, an eye-witness of the last days of the siege, has left us some appalling pictures of the time. Even the opulent died of hunger—

> My priests and mine elders—gave up the ghost in the city; *

and the privations of the living could be read in their faces—

> Their image is blacker than a coal—they are not known in the streets.†

The children expired in their mothers' arms—

> The children and the sucklings—swoon in the streets of the city,
> Their soul is poured out—into their mothers' bosom.‡

Under the madness of hunger women changed their nature—

> The hands of the pitiful women—have sodden their own children.§

Reason gave way under the tension, and frenzied fanatics filled the city with murder. Bloodstained figures reeled through the streets as if intoxicated, from whom people recoiled in horror—

* i. 19.
† iv 8; v. 10.
‡ ii. 11, 12, 19.
§ iv. 3, 10; ii. 20.

They wander as blind men in the streets—they are polluted with blood;
Depart, Unclean! they cried unto them—depart, depart, touch not!*

On the ninth day of the fourth month a breach was made in the wall, no doubt on the north side, the least defensible quarter, and resistance being hopeless, the king and his troops escaped by the gate between the two walls,† and breaking through the enemy's lines fled towards the Jordan. They were pursued by the Chaldeans, and overtaken in the plains of Jericho. The king was brought to headquarters at Riblah, where his sons were slain in his sight and his own eyes put out, and he was cast into fetters to be carried to Babylon. A month later Nebuzaradan, at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, burnt the Temple to the ground and all the chief houses in the city, and threw down the walls. The brazen pillars and the sea of brass were broken up and carried away, along with all the precious vessels of the Temple. The chief priest Seraiah and many others were taken to Riblah and executed. The inhabitants of the city, including those who had fallen away to the Chaldeans, and much of the population of the country, were deported to Babylon, only the poorest of the people being left

* iv. 14.

† Stade in his plan, Hist. i., p. 593, represents the one wall as running along the east side of the south-western hill, and the other along the west side of the Temple hill, the Tyropœon valley lying between them. This is not certain. The gate by which the king escaped no doubt lay on the south-east of the city, and may have been the Dung Gate (leading to Tophet), or rather the Fountain Gate a little further east, as it was in the vicinity of the upper pool and the king's gardens.

to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Micah, spoken near 150 years before, that Jerusalem should become heaps (Ch. iii. 12). The city was completely deserted, the people that had escaped seeking a place of abode in other towns. Zion was a place where foxes walked (Lam. v. 18).*

CHAPTER II

THE EXILE

15. **MEANING OF THE FALL OF THE STATE.**—If we take the prophets as our guides the fall of Judah suggests several things. (1) It was due to the sin of the people. Yet it may be asked, Was the sin of Jerusalem, from which it fell, though in some ways different, greater than that prevailing in modern European capitals? Probably it was not. If it was not, then though the principles on which God governs all states may be the same, these principles must have been applied to Israel in a way more ideal. Further, the sense of national sin must have been reflected in the mind of the prophets, who might be called the conscience of Israel, in a way more intense than now—that is, in a way truer to the real idea of sin. In a strange passage (iv. 23)

* Details of the capture of the city and the executions which followed are given in 2 Kings xxv and Jer. lii. The numbers of those carried away, and the dates given in v. 28-30 of the latter passage are difficult to understand. The verses are wanting in LXX.

Jeremiah expresses an awful presentiment of the desolations which moral evil must work. He fancies himself to have outlived the judgment, and to be treading on the ashes of the extinct world. He is the last man, alone amidst the silence of death. "I beheld the earth, and lo it was waste and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld, and lo there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled."

(2) The fall of Judah was the triumph of Jehovah. If when other peoples perished their gods sank with them, Jehovah rose the higher over the ruins of Jerusalem. He was seen to be the God of Righteousness, the moral Ruler of the world—

> Jehovah of Hosts was exalted in judgment,
> And the Holy God sanctified in righteousness (Is. v. 16).

This was the Jehovah of the prophets. As for the Jehovah of the masses and the false prophets, the mere national Deity of Israel, he had succumbed before the gods of Babylon. And possibly many of the less instructed of the people fell, for a time at least, into such perplexity that all faith in the name of "Jehovah" was extinguished. And naturally, if to the prophets and those of like mind with them Jehovah had triumphed, in the eyes of the nations He had suffered a defeat. The idea of a God exercising a moral rule over His own people would not occur to the heathen, and they judged that Jehovah was weak and unable to protect His people—"These are the people of Jehovah, and they are gone forth out of his land" into exile (Ezek. xxxvi. 20). The revelation of Jehovah to the nations had suffered an

eclipse. His star had sunk with that of His people. This was felt by prophets like Ezekiel. Yet the obscuration was but temporary. The Lord would build up Zion and appear in His glory (Ps. cii. 16). When He restored His repentant people His glory would be revealed, and all flesh would see it together (Is. xl. 5). Then both His power and His moral rule would be made manifest to the eyes of the nations (Ezek. xxxix. 25-29).

These are prophetic ideas. History suggests a third. Though the destruction of the state might appear the greatest calamity that could befall the Kingdom of God, it was in its effects the greatest step towards Christianity taken since the Exodus. For first, it divorced, for a time and in idea at least, religion from ritual and sensuous worship and made it a thing altogether of the mind. The life of prophets and people become one of faith absolutely (John xvi. 7); and the religious mind, no more hampered by local limitations and traditions, was free to pursue its ideals and project them upon the screen of the future; and to this is due the purity and spiritual elevation of the religious aspirations that belong to the period of the Exile. Again, the idea of a mere God of the nation had been buried in the ruins of the state. The idea, necessary to begin with, must give place to ideas more advanced, at once wider and more inward. Though the people had perished the individuals remained, and Jehovah remained, and thus religion became a thing of the individual mind. The old covenant made with the people in a mass gave place to the new covenant, the tables of stone to a law written on the heart of

each (Jer. xxxi. 31). The individual rose to the consciousness of the worth of his own personal spirit, and the joy of a personal relation to God. And religious individualism is religious universalism. The death of the people was the birth of the individual, and the ruin of the State the rise of the Church.

16. THOSE LEFT IN THE LAND (Jer. xl ff.).—Although the Chaldeans thought it necessary in order to break the refractory spirit of the people to destroy their Temple and raze the capital to the ground, they had no wish to make the land a desert, or leave the people remaining without the protection of a settled government. The members of the royal house nearest to the throne had fallen by the hand of the executioner at Riblah; and even if it had been otherwise experience showed how impolitic it would be to leave the chief authority any longer in the hands of the old reigning dynasty. They accordingly appointed as governor *Gedaliah*, one of the chief men of Jerusalem. Gedaliah belonged to a family distinguished for piety and moderation. It was his grandfather Shaphan who brought the newly discovered book of the Law to Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 9), and his father Ahikam to whom Jeremiah owed his life when arraigned for uttering threats against the Temple (Jer. xxvi. 24). His selection by the Chaldeans was due to their knowledge that he belonged to the party who had counselled submission, and to their assurance that he would continue to pursue the same policy. He fixed the seat of his government at Mizpah, north of Jerusalem, where the wives and children of the men destined for captivity, as well as the princesses, the king's daughters, were committed

to his care. Jeremiah had been found in the city and doomed along with the rest of the inhabitants to deportation, and in company of a band of exiles had been carried north to Ramah. The part he had played in the siege, however, became known to the Chaldeans, and orders came from the highest quarter to treat him kindly and allow him his choice either to go to Babylon or remain at home. The prophet chose to remain in the land and repaired to Gedaliah at Mizpah.

Gedaliah's Rule.—Gedaliah's first care was to secure peace in the country. The native army had been completely broken up, but scattered bands existed here and there in the land under Ishmael, a member of the royal house, Johanan son of Kareah, and other officers. Gedaliah exerted all his influence to restrain these officers from further thought of resistance, and, on the other hand, to assure them that they had nothing to fear from the Chaldeans. The task was one of delicacy and difficulty. In spite of their reverses, the spirit of the people was not broken. Indeed, it was impossible to break it, because it was religion that sustained it, however perverted in some ways the religion was. While the Temple stood they assured themselves of Jehovah's protection, and even looked on their brethren who had gone into exile with Jehoiachin with some disdain: "They are far from the Lord; to us is the land given in possession" (Ezek. xi. 15). Because more fortunate than their brethren, they concluded they were more worthy. Now, indeed, it was true that the Temple no more stood, but the land remained, and they were still in it. And God

had sworn to give it to Abraham, whose children they were; "Abraham was one and he inherited the land; but we are many: the land is given to us for inheritance" (Ezek. xxxiii. 24). With such a faith and such a temper they were more ready "to stand upon the sword" than to seek peace. The efforts of Gedaliah were so far successful that the military chiefs came in and acknowledged his authority. Peace and security seemed so well assured that those who had dispersed themselves in Moab, Ammon, and Edom returned again to the country.

His Assassination.—The attempt to continue the political life of the people was destined to fail. Whether true religion would have profited by its success may be questioned. Rather it was necessary for the purification of religion that, as Hosea says (iii. 4), it should be completely divorced for a time from all the old forms of national life. Gedaliah's successful administration excited the ill-will of Baalis, King of the Ammonites, and he determined to effect his destruction. Whether his ill-will was mere national malevolence, or arose from fear that the extension of his own power westward might be checked, is not said. He found a willing tool in Ishmael, an officer already mentioned. Ishmael was of the seed royal, and may have been jealous of Gedaliah, or he may have been eager to wreck the Chaldean viceroyalty out of revenge for the wrongs of his own family. The plot against the governor came to the ears of Johanan, who revealed it to Gedaliah, offering to make away with Ishmael privately, so that no one should know. Gedaliah was so generous and upright himself that he refused

to give credit to the rumour of Ishmael's treachery. Shortly after, Ishmael, with ten followers, appeared at Mizpah, and was hospitably entertained by the governor. Either while at table or at a favourable opportunity he and his men rose up and slew Gedaliah and all the Jews who were with him, as well as some Chaldean officers. Next day he perpetrated a massacre for which no motive can be discovered at all, except that the hypocritical fanatic (Jer. xli. 6) was at war with the whole order of things established in the land, and with all who acquiesced in it (Jer. xli. 4 ff). Ishmael carried away all the people who had been with Gedaliah, intending to pass over Jordan with them. At the great waters of Gibeon—memorable as the place where the young men of Joab and Abner "played" before them (2 Sam. ii. 13)—he was intercepted by Johanan and his men of war. He escaped with eight men across the Jordan, but all the captives were rescued by Johanan.

Flight to Egypt.—Disappointed in their hope to capture the assassin and propitiate the Chaldeans by delivering him into their hands, Johanan and his men feared that vengeance for the murder would fall upon themselves, and they resolved to flee into Egypt. Possibly unanimity did not prevail among them, and at a halting place near Bethlehem they agreed to ask the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, solemnly pledging themselves to follow his counsel whether to abide in the land or descend into Egypt. After ten days the prophet was able to exhort them in the name of the Lord to remain in the land, where they would have peace; in Egypt they would be involved in the wars and calamities which

Nebuchadnezzar would bring on that country, and perish. Johanan and his men were in too great terror of the Chaldeans to listen to the prophet, to whom they replied: "Thou speakest falsely; Jehovah our God hath not sent thee to say, Ye shall not go down into Egypt, but Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans" (xliii. 2-3). So the men of war went down to Egypt, carrying with them all the people under their charge, and compelling Baruch and Jeremiah to accompany them.

Thus after two months the semblance of a state came to an end. For the next fifty years the history of Judah is a blank. There were certainly many people still in the country, and religion did not altogether die out. All that is known is one or two external facts. The Edomites gradually crept northwards, and occupied the south of Judah. If not in great masses, straggling parties of Ammonites and other tribes crossed the Jordan and occupied parts of the country (Neh. vi. 18). In the district of Samaria the foreign colonists settled at various times there by Sargon, Esarhaddon, and Asnapper (Assurbanipal?), gradually amalgamated with the native Israelites, and there arose the half-caste population afterwards known as the Samaritans.

17. THE EXILES IN EGYPT (Jer. xliv.).—In later times Egypt became almost a second fatherland of the Jews. Philo estimates the Jewish population in his days at a million. The emigrants of 586 settled in the frontier towns, such as Tahpanhes and Migdol, but also in Memphis and even in Pathros, or upper Egypt. They seem for the most

part to have belonged to the lower ranks of the people, and probably numbers of them fell away to the religion of Egypt; while others, pressed into the army, perished in the wars that long devastated the country. On entering the country they seem to have returned to the low idolatries which had been for a time abandoned, particularly to the worship of "the queen of heaven." And when Jeremiah remonstrated with them, the women, who were specially addicted to that cult, gave him a very outspoken answer: "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of Jehovah, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly burn incense to the queen of heaven, as we have done, we and our fathers, for then had we plenty of bread, and were well and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven we have been consumed by the sword and by famine" (Jer. xliv. 15-19). This feminine argument reveals what was passing in many minds. Recent miseries had produced a religious bewilderment, and faith in Jehovah was shattered.

Many Jews appear to have been deported to Egypt when it came under the rule of the Persians. And when Alexandria was founded by Alexander the Great, multitudes migrated there voluntarily, attracted by the privilege of citizenship offered to them. These, however, were men confirmed in their own religion, and in no danger of falling away to heathenism. Indeed, their religious scruples were so well understood that a particular quarter of the city was assigned to them "that they might lead a purer life by mingling less with foreigners."

And under the Ptolemies the Jewish population was continually recruited by emigration from Palestine. It was this Jewish community that produced such philosophers as Philo and such Christian orators as Apollos. Perhaps its greatest claim to gratitude is that it gave to the world the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which was the Bible of the Christian world for many ages.

18. THE EXILES IN BABYLON.—When the people were carried away from Judah they were settled, not as isolated individuals, but in masses at various points in the Babylonian empire. One colony, which included Ezekiel, was located at Tel Abib, on the Chebar, some tributary of the Euphrates in Babylonia ; and where they were planted in great towns, such as Babylon, probably a special quarter of the city was assigned for their occupation. There is no reason to suppose they were persecuted or harshly treated. In the midst of a great empire, and surrounded by a thick native population, they would be considered harmless, and allowed the same freedom as other inhabitants. The example of Ezekiel shows that they married and owned houses, as Jeremiah advised them (xxix. 5 ff.) ; and no doubt they cultivated the soil and traded like those about them.* Babylon was, as Ezekiel calls it, "the land of merchants" (xvi. 29 *cf.* Is. xlvii. 15), and possibly it was now that the Jews acquired that devotion to business which has characterised them since, but of which their early writers speak with contempt (Hos. xii. 7, 8, Is. xxiii.).

Religion.—The communities of exiles appear to

* Comp. Sennacherib's representation, 2 Kings xviii. 32.

have been left by the Babylonian government to organise themselves according to their own ideas. The heads of families, the Elders so often mentioned by Ezekiel, probably united to form a sort of ruling body having supervision of the religious and social life of their people. The captives carried away in 597 cherished the same optimistic hopes as the people still left at home, and were ready to believe with the prophet Hananiah that in two years they would return from Babylon with Jehoiachin at their head. In a certain sense this delusion was favourable to the religious life of the exiles: it nourished their patriotism and their sense of national distinctness, and prevented their becoming acclimatised to the soil and the religious atmosphere of Babylon. Of course in a foreign, and therefore unclean land (Amos vii. 17), unhallowed by the abode of Jehovah in it, they could not serve Him with sacrifice and offering. In a beautiful passage in which he contemplates the exile, Hos. ix. 4 says: "They shall not pour out wine unto Jehovah, nor set in order their sacrifices; their bread shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted, for it shall not come into the house of the Lord. What will ye do in the day of the solemn assembly, and in the day of the feast of the Lord?" But though ritual service of Jehovah had to cease, the more spiritual exercises of religion could still be continued. Jeremiah, in his letter to the exiles, exhorts them to pray unto the Lord both for themselves and for the country which gave them shelter. "Ye shall call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall pray to

the Lord for the city whither ye have been carried captive, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (xxix. 7-12). Where a prophet such as Ezekiel existed among them, they could listen to his living voice; and where there was no prophet alive to speak, the voices of the prophets of the past could still be heard. The Sabbath was both a bond of union among themselves and a badge of distinction from the heathen, and on this day of rest their faith might be kept alive by the reading of such books as Deuteronomy and the writings of the prophets (Ezek. xxxviii. 17). These Sabbath assemblies in the exile, with their reading of the sacred books, were the beginning of what afterward became the Synagogue in Palestine. The necessity of seeking support for their faith and hope in their past history and literature led also to the collecting and editing of the earlier books, such as Judges, Samuel, and Kings, which recorded the great deeds done by Jehovah for His people. These literary efforts would not be made early in the Exile, nor before the captives had begun to feel at ease in their new home. In 2 Kings xxv. 27 there is a record of the release of Jehoiachin by Evil Merodach not earlier than about the year 560. But there floated always before the people's mind the prospect of a Restoration, and with the restoration a purified worship of Jehovah. It is with this prospect before him that Ezekiel sketches the new Temple and the new ministrations which shall arise in the latter day (Ch. xl.-xlviii.). And others animated by the same hopes as Ezekiel, would seek to gather together and codify the collections of ritual legisla-

tion already existing in their day. It is contended by some scholars that no ritual laws existed in writing previous to the Exile,—on the ground that in a corporation like the priesthood the ritual praxis would be handed down by tradition ; and that it was only when the Temple was destroyed and the details of the ritual service in danger of being forgotten that they were committed to writing in the Exile. The question when the ritual laws were actually written down is of little consequence ; it is of more importance to observe that the ritual *practice* in its general details at least was firmly established before the time of Ezekiel, as must be inferred from his Book.

Influence of Babylon.—It is surprising how little impression the land of their exile made upon the Hebrew captives. It is the scenery of Palestine, its hills and brooks and woodlands, that fills the imagination of Ezekiel and the author of Isa. xl ff. The eye of captives like Ezekiel sickened over the dreary flats of Babylon and pined for the uplands of their native land, "the mountains of Israel." Ps. cxxxvii. gives a touching picture of the feelings of the better class of exiles. They were "like men that dreamed" ; their hearts were so occupied with memories of Zion and the past that their eyes and ears were sealed to all the movements of the life around them. The religious thought of Babylon has left almost no trace upon the Hebrew writings. It is possible that the references to Sheòl or Hades, the place of the dead, in Isa. xiv. and Ezek. xxxii., and allusions to Eden, the Garden of God, in Ezek. xxviii ff., may reveal a certain Babylonian colour. If so, it is of the slightest kind. The truth is that on such subjects the popular

mind, both in Israel and Babylon, cherished the same conceptions, having inherited them from the remotest past. The two peoples had also in common a Cosmic or Creation mythology, though the Monotheism of Israel shore this mythology of much of its luxuriance, so that it now appears only in allusions to "the Sea," "the Dragon," "Rahab," and the like in poetical books such as Job.

19. A RELIGIOUS RETROSPECT (Ezek. i.-xxiv.).—In his prophetic addresses now gathered into the first half of his Book Ezekiel sought to induce his fellow-exiles of 597 to take a Retrospect of the past history of the nation, and to learn its lessons. Particularly in Ch. xvi., xx., and xxiii. he reviews the history of the people, which he characterises as one long act of infidelity to Jehovah: in their worship they had not been worshipping *Him*, and by their immoralities they had profaned His name. And this was the cause of the judgments which had already fallen on them and would yet fall more heavily till the state was a ruin (Ch. xv.). From the ideal point of view of a pure worship of God Ezekiel's judgment was just. Yet it would not be fair to the people to suppose that they fully understood their errors. The worship they gave they meant for Jehovah; and the manner of it they fancied was what He desired. It was their conception of Him that was at fault.

So long as the city stood Ezekiel preached to deaf ears. A strange optimism possessed the minds of the exiles. They were confident even when the city was invested by the Chaldeans that it could not fall. This state of mind is difficult to analyse. It could

not be merely that their patriotism and love for their city made them obstinately refuse to entertain the idea of its being destroyed. What upheld them was their faith in Jehovah. But what were the elements of this faith? No doubt something more than that Jehovah was their national God. There were good men among these exiles, and they may have also held that their God was God alone, that His cause was the cause of religion and of mankind, and that it could not be but that He would maintain it. In the mind of Orientals a lofty religion is not uncommonly combined with a feeble sense of morals. From Amos downwards the prophets seem to have preached in vain; the people could not take in their conception of Jehovah as an absolutely moral Being, who, just because they were His people, must visit their iniquities upon them (Amos iii. 2).

At last the catastrophe came, and Jerusalem fell. And what the prophets had failed to effect events accomplished. History had confirmed the prophetic teaching, verified every gloomy prediction. The prophets' idea of Jehovah was seen to be the true one; their verdict upon the history of the people was just. These convictions did come home to the mind of the exiles all at once, but when they did they were overwhelmed. A dejection, as deep as their former buoyancy was high, seized their minds. They felt lying under an irrevocable doom entailed on them by their past history—"Our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how then shall we live"? (Ezek. xxxiii. 10). Nothing was reserved for them but to bear the inexhaustible penalty of their past evil, till

like the generation in the wilderness they fell prostrated beneath it.

20. **A DOOR OF HOPE** (Ezek. xviii., xxxiii.-xxxvii.).—It is this stupor of despair, paralysing all moral action on the part of the individual, that Ezekiel has to minister to. And this is his true work as a prophet. He stands between two eras. The old era was closed, but a new era was about to open, and a new Israel about to arise. Before the Exile all the prophets threaten, after it they all comfort by promises (Isa. xl. 1). Two perplexities paralysed the people's mind, one in regard to their God, the other about themselves. *First*, God's judgments had been so terrible that they feared His wrath would pursue them till a full end was made of them. To this the prophet replies, that the judgment was a moral necessity, the Righteous God could do no other. But judgment was His strange work—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he should turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die"? (xxxiii. 10-20).

Secondly, they were perplexed about themselves. The old idea of the individual's solidarity with the nation haunted them, and they feared the national sin must be borne by them till it was exhausted. "The fathers sinned and we bear their iniquities" (Lam. v. 7). The prophet seeks to extricate the individual from his involution in the nation, and to awaken in every mind the feeling of personal relation to God—"All souls are mine, saith the Lord; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son. The son shall not die for the sins of the father, the

soul that sinneth shall die. I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn and live" (xviii. 4, 20, 32). These were the truths needful for the time, and they had never been stated so clearly. They created the individual, disentangling him from the national past. They awoke his hope, for God was merciful; and they stimulated to moral activity, for God was righteous. And in his relations to God man's first necessity is to know that He *is* righteous, if his second be to be assured that He is merciful.

Ezekiel also opened up wider prospects by his promise of the Messiah, the Lord's "servant David," to be the eternal ruler of the people, and by his vision of the resurrection of the people, which lie like dry and bleached bones all over the valley (Ch. xxxvii.). The Spirit of the Lord like a breath from the four winds shall enter into them and they shall stand upon their feet. But most surprising is the passage xxxvi. 16-30, in which all the evangelical truths of the New Testament are stated, and in the same order as St Paul presents them.

21. A MIRROR OF THE POPULAR MIND (Lamentations).—Apart from the profound pathos of the Book, the interest of Lamentations arises just from the fact that it is not the work of a great prophet, but comes from the heart of the people, reflecting their mind and showing the turn their thoughts and feelings were taking some years after the exile. Only two or three things can be mentioned.

(1) The terrible privations of the siege and the bloody carnival of its close still haunt the imagination (§ 14). Was any sorrow ever like Zion's sorrow? Surely the punishment of Sodom, which perished in

a moment, was light compared to hers.* (2) There is ever present the deep sense of national humiliation in the eyes of other peoples. "The heathen have become the head; they clap the hands over Zion, saying, 'Is this the perfection of beauty'? Thou hast made us the offscouring in the midst of the peoples." † This sense of humiliation is reflected in all the literature of the Exile (Isa. xlix. 7; xli. 14). And, as always in Israel, religion mingled its memories and emotions with these patriotic feelings and made them more crushing. (3) The people is bewildered by the thought that it is their God himself who has brought such afflictions upon them. It is His own sanctuary He has laid waste, His own religion He has made to cease. He no more speaks. Prophecy is silent. He has covered Himself with a cloud, and no prayer can pass through. Has He in truth abandoned His cause in the world and the cause of His people? ‡

(4) Not at once but gradually they are seen turning their eyes in upon themselves, and there, and not in any mysterious dispensation of their God, they find the cause of their disasters. It was for the "multitudes of her transgressions" that He had afflicted Zion—"for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests." Unparalleled though her sorrows were, Jehovah was righteous. || All their past history had been a failure, and all their former thoughts of themselves a delusion. And

* i. 19; ii. 11-12, 20; iv. 3-10; v. 6, 9-13.
† i. 5, 8, 17, 21; ii. 15-17; iii. 45; v. 15-18.
‡ ii. 1-7, 9; iii. 44; iv. 11, 12; v. 22.
|| i. 5, 8, 18-22; iii. 42; iv. 13-15; ii. 14.

with this condemnation of themselves there awoke a new hope in God. Tentatively, and with hesitation, weighing considerations for and against, the mind of the people is seen feeling its way toward the mercy of God—" It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed " ; " The Lord will not cast off for ever " ; " He afflicteth not willingly " ; " Let us lift up our heart and our hands to heaven . . . till the Lord look down and behold from heaven." The whole passage (Ch. iii. 20-50) is one of the most singular and beautiful in Scripture.

22. **THE EMPIRE OF THE EAST.**—It is the general opinion among scholars that the great alluvial plains watered by the Tigris and Euphrates, and to a large extent created by them, were in the earliest times inhabited by a people of a different race from the Shemites who are known to us as Babylonians and Assyrians. This primitive people were the inventors of the Cuneiform writing, and to them belong also in great measure the religious and mythological systems revealed to us by the inscriptions. At a later time, though still before the dawn of history, the plains of the two rivers were overrun by Shemitic peoples. These peoples amalgamated with the primitive population, served themselves heirs to their culture and literature, and eventually succeeded in impressing their own character and thought as well as their own Shemitic speech upon the entire country. The southern portion of this country, with its chain of great cities, such as Babylon, lying on or near the Euphrates, down towards the Persian Gulf, was Babylonia. The northern portion, with its base on the Tigris and its

cluster of cities, such as Nineveh, in the vicinity of that river, was Assyria. While the country lying between the two rivers, north of Babylonia and west of Assyria, intersected by such streams as the Chabor, and containing famous cities like Harran, was called Mesopotamia. A fourth division was the district lying about the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates, along the shores of the Persian Gulf. This was Chaldea proper, the country of the Kaldu, though the name does not appear till after 1000 B.C. The political history of the country has three divisions, with its centre of gravity first in Babylonia (Babylon), then in Assyria (Nineveh), and finally in Babylon.

(1) *First Babylonian Kingdom.*—In the earliest times a kingdom was a city, with its surrounding territory, the city having a god who was its patron, and a temple dedicated to his worship. A fabulous antiquity is assigned by scholars to the dynasties of these Babylonian cities (5000 to 7000 B.C.), whose rulers carried their arms as far west as Phœnicia, and washed their weapons in the Great Sea. From about the middle of the third millennium B.C. Babylon was the metropolis of Babylonia, and continued so for 2000 years. Its history was chequered; sometimes it was ruled by native and sometimes by foreign dynasties. In its wars with Assyria fortune was often on the side of the latter, and the Babylonian rulers were at times little better than viceroys of the Great King. Some of the later Assyrian monarchs even assumed the direct sovereignty of Babylon, such as Tiglath Pileser III., who ruled there under the name of Pul. But amidst all its

vicissitudes, Babylon continued the royal city of Babylonia down to the Persian period.

(2) *The Assyrian Empire.*—Assyria was a colony of Babylonia (Gen. x. 11 ff.). In the hot and fertile plains of the south—so fertile that grain is said to have yielded three hundred fold—the Babylonians were less energetic and warlike, and more devoted to the arts of peace, to agriculture and to trade. But in the north, beside the Median and the Armenian mountains, and in constant conflict with the warlike tribes inhabiting them, the Assyrians developed a hardier frame and became a nation whose occupation was war, though in the arts, such as sculpture and architecture, they also surpassed their southern neighbours. From the middle of the second millennium B.C. for a thousand years Assyria was the predominant power in the East. Centuries were spent in subjugating Armenia and pushing westward to the Euphrates. It was in the time of Shalmaneser II. (860-824) that Israel first felt the shock of the Assyrian arms. A great combination of Syrian states, including Damascus, Hamath, and Israel, formed to stem the tide of Assyrian aggression, was utterly defeated by Shalmaneser at Karkar in Hamath (854). From that day the doom of the Syrian states was sealed. Conquest of the Mediterranean seaboard to the borders of Egypt was only a question of time. The act of Ahaz in invoking the aid of Assyria against Syria and Ephraim (Isa. vii.), insane though it was, only precipitated what was inevitable. It gave Tiglath Pileser III. the pretext for interference which he would otherwise have found. In 734 he

invaded Israel and deported to Assyria the inhabitants of Galilee and Gilead; and twelve years later Samaria fell before the assault of Sargon. Judah, though it continued to exist for a hundred and fifty years longer, was henceforth but a province of Assyria, till the fall of Nineveh and the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Egyptians at Carchemish gave it a new master in the Chaldeans.

(3) *The New Babylonian or Chaldean Empire.*—The Chaldeans were, of course, of the same Shemitic race as the Babylonians and Assyrians. Their name is said not to appear in the inscriptions earlier than the tenth century B.C. They occupied the most southerly part of the country, the swamps and islands at the mouths of the two great rivers (at this time still falling into the sea separately), and the shores of the Persian Gulf. Here they formed a number of small principalities, one of which was Bît Yakin (country of Yakin), "the land of the sea," the kingdom of Merodach Baladan (Isa. xxxix.). The Chaldeans naturally spread northward and mixed with the Babylonians, and the ambition of their princes was to seat themselves on the throne of Babylon. Babylonia was in later times a dependency of Assyria, and the Chaldean usurpers were sometimes welcomed as deliverers from the Assyrian yoke. The renowned Merodach Baladan, who gave trouble to three Assyrian monarchs—Tiglath Pileser, Sargon, and Sennacherib—succeeded in occupying the throne of Babylon for twelve years (721-710), when he was dispossessed by Sargon. The indefatigable veteran, taking advantage of the change in the throne of Nineveh

on the death of Sargon (705), again usurped the Babylonian crown, which he wore but a few months, when Sennacherib expelled him. In 625 we find the Chaldean Nabopolassar occupying the throne of Babylon, though it is uncertain how he attained his elevation. Babylon being a dependency of Assyria, Nabopolassar was merely viceroy, but as the fall of Nineveh enabled him to transmit the crown to his descendants, the New Babylonian or Chaldean Empire may be dated from his accession. It was, however, his son, Nebuchadnezzar (604-561), one of the greatest rulers of the East, to whom the splendour of the empire was due, as well as the glory of Babylon, its capital, which he rebuilt. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by several feeble princes, of whom the last was Nabonidus (Nabuna'id = Nebo is exalted), under whom the empire fell before the arms of Cyrus (539), having lasted less than a hundred years, and with its fall the sovereignty of the East passed from the Shemites to the Persians, a people of the Aryan race.*

23. **THE RISE OF CYRUS AND THE PERSIANS.**—In his great rock inscription at Behistun, near Ecbatana, Darius says: "My father is Hystaspes; the father of Hystaspes was Arsames; the father of Arsames was Ariyaramnes; the father of Ariyaramnes Teispes; the father of Teispes was Achæmenes. On that account we are named Achæmenians. From ancient times have we been

* The eldest son of Nabonidus was Belshazzar (Bel-shar-uzur, Bel defend the king!). He appears to have been in command of the army in the war with Cyrus, and probably had been associated by his father in the throne (Dan. v. 1 ff.).

great, from ancient times has our family been kings. Eight of my family have been kings before me; I am the ninth; in two branches have we been kings."* The two royal branches referred to ruled over Elam and Persia respectively. Cyrus, who was the second of the name, belonged to the line that ruled Elam, the native name of which was Anshan. Cyrus consequently was not a Persian, and what religion he professed is not very certain. The events of Cyrus' career are narrated, though unfortunately very imperfectly, in a clay tablet recording the events of the reign of Nabonidus, the last King of Babylon, and in a cylinder inscription of his own. His first war was with Media, the country lying to the North of Elam. The Median king was Astyages, son of Cyaxares, the conqueror of Nineveh. In the tablet of Nabonidus, under the sixth year of that ruler (549), it is said, "Astyages gathered his army and marched against Cyrus, king of Elam. But the soldiers of Astyages revolted from him, and delivered him up to Cyrus. Cyrus proceeded to the land of Ecbatana, the royal city." The whole Median kingdom up to the Halys (Kisil Irmak), the Lydian frontier, was annexed by Cyrus to his native state of Elam. Under the ninth year of Nabonidus Cyrus is

* THE PERSIAN ROYAL HOUSE

(Achæmenes)
Teispes

ELAM (Anshan)	Cyrus i. Cambyses i.	Ariyaramnes Arsames Hystaspes — PERSIA.

ELAM and PERSIA united.
1. *Cyrus ii.* (558-529).
2. *Cambyses ii.* (529-522).
3. *Darius i.* (521-485).

again mentioned, but now called King of Persia (546). This country had also in the interval come under his dominion, though whether by conquest or inheritance is uncertain. Crœsus, the Lydian monarch, felt himself threatened by the proximity of Cyrus, and formed a defensive alliance with Amasis of Egypt and Sparta, to which Nabonidus of Babylon also became a party. Without waiting for the co-operation of his allies Crœsus crossed the Halys and encountered Cyrus, who inflicted upon him a severe defeat. Following up his victory Cyrus marched westward and again was victorious in a great battle fought in the neighbourhood of Sardis, the capital of Crœsus. These successes made Cyrus master of the whole of Asia Minor up to the Ægean Sea (546-5), and put an end to the kingdom of Crœsus, the richest monarch of antiquity.* The turn of Babylon came next, though several years elapsed before Cyrus was able to deliver his final blow; and unfortunately, owing to the mutilation of the records, no clear idea of the progress of events can be formed.

24. PROPHETIC VOICES FROM THE END OF THE EXILE.—As the doom of Babylon drew near, Prophecy, which had been dumb for half a century, again began to lift up her voice. The victorious career of Cyrus created a delirium of joy and hope among the captives in Babylon. It was not a hope of deliverance merely; deliverance meant the triumph of Jehovah's cause and the incoming of His kingdom upon the earth. The older view of prophecy,

* The treasures said by ancient writers to have fallen into the hands of the conqueror of Sardis and Babylon have been computed at more than 126 millions sterling. Gesen., Comm. on Isaiah, ii. 90.

which identified it with the prediction of future events, has given way to another view which regards prophecy as in the main teaching of moral and religious truth. The old view has, however, important elements of truth in it. The prophet's face was always turned to the future. His hope was in Jehovah alone; his theme always what He was doing or about to do. More than one prophet has given a definition of prophecy, and all definitions include prediction. Amos iii. 7 says, "The Lord God doeth nothing without revealing His counsel to His servants the prophets. The lion roars, who will not fear? The Lord God speaks, who can but prophesy"? (*cf.* Isa. xli. 21 ff.). Consequently it was just when great convulsions among the nations were beginning to make their tremors felt that the prophets were roused to speak—Amos and Hosea before the downfall of Samaria; Isaiah and Micah when the storm-cloud of the Assyrian invasion was rising on the northern horizon; Jeremiah during the expiring throes of the Judean State; and now several unnamed prophets amidst the shocks which laid the empire of Babylon in ruins (Isa. xiii f., xxi. 1-10, xl ff.). To the prophetic mind there was no such thing as mere events or occurrences; Jehovah animated all events, and they were all movements towards the consummation of His great work in the world. The prophets' hearts were filled with great religious issues, with presentiments of the future of the world in God's hand, a world where righteousness would reign, and peace prevail, and the tabernacle of God would be with men. These presentiments were so vivid in their hearts that they were constantly looking for the ful-

filment of them. And thus when the currents of providence, often too sluggish to their eager eyes, received a sudden quickening, when great events were moving and Jehovah visibly interposing in the affairs of the world, they felt that He was taking to Him His great power. It was but a step or two when the kingdom would be the Lord's.

Besides the great prophecy, Is. xl ff., there are several small but striking prophecies that must be assigned to the last days of Babylon, such as Is. xiii f., xxi. 1-10, and perhaps xxxiv f.* The general principle on which these prophecies are assigned to this date is this: Though what was written aforetime was written for our learning, yet primarily the prophets addressed their contemporaries; and speaking to their contemporaries, they naturally spoke to them of their own condition, and of the forces, moral or political, operating around them, from which they had to hope or fear. Now, in these passages the people are in bondage; the great world-powers are Babylon on the one hand and Cyrus with the Medes on the other, and these powers are about to come into decisive conflict. The inference is that the passages belong to the eve of the downfall of Babylon.

1. *Isa. xxi.* 1-10.—A singular and weird prophecy of this time is headed "Oracle of the Desert of the Sea"; the desert being the region S.-E. of Babylon, and the sea that bounding Elam on the south. It is now known that Cyrus' final attack

* The prophecy, Jer. l.-li., should also be read here. It is probably an expansion by a writer of this age of the prophecy, Jer. li. 59-64, and other prophecies of Jeremiah.

on Babylon was made from the south-east. The passage has two parts, v. 1-5 and v. 6-10. The first part consists of three hurried but graphic scenes: (1) the advancing enemy, sweeping on like whirlwinds (v. 1-2); (2) the prophet's agitation at the prospect of the conflict and carnage at hand (v. 3-4); and (3) a scene of revelry in Babylon suddenly broken in upon by the alarm of the foe (v. 5).

> As whirlwinds in the south, sweeping through,
> It cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.
> A grievous vision is shown me:
> The Robber robbeth, the Spoiler spoileth!
> Go up, O Elam! Besiege, O Media!
> All her sighing do I cause to cease.

The "sighing" is that caused by the oppressions of Babylon. These are the preparations,—what shall the issue be? The prophet is bidden set a watchman who shall declare what he seeth. The "watchman" is no other than his own prophetic mind, which looks out for the revelation from God, and communicates it to his natural self.

> Go, set a watchman,
> What he seeth let him declare!—
> And he answered and said:
> Babylon is fallen, is fallen!
> And all the images of her gods hath he broken to the ground.*

2. *Isa. xiii.-xiv.*—A splendid piece of prophetical literature on the same theme of Babylon's downfall is given in Isa. xiii. The prophet in ecstasy hears a voice crying:

* See the whole passage in R.V.

Set up an ensign on a bare mountain,
Lift up the voice, wave the hand,
That they may go into the gates of the nobles.

The nobles (or tyrants) are the Babylonians. The ensign and the shout and the waving of the hand are Jehovah's signal to the nations, and when *His* signal is seen the furthest off nations hasten to it. The prophet is in a trance, with his eye and ear open. On the far-off mountains he hears the roar of multitudes, and discerns the resemblance of a great people, with Jehovah at its head marshalling His host (v. 4-5). It is the Medes, who are hurling themselves from their mountains upon Babylon:

Behold I stir up against them the Medes . . .
And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency,
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

3. *Isa. xiv.* 4-23.—With this prophecy is connected a fine taunting elegy which shall be sung over the fallen Prince of Babylon, xiv. 4-23. (1) Jubilation of the earth and all nature over the downfall of the oppressor (v. 4-8). (2) Commotion in Sheòl, the dwelling-place of the dead, when the Prince descends among them (v. 9, 10).

Sheòl beneath is moved at thee—to meet thee at thy coming;
It stirreth up the Shades for thee—all the great ones of the earth.
They shall speak and say unto thee:
Art thou become weak as we—art thou become like unto us?

(3) When alive the Prince felt within him the heart of a god; he aspired to seat himself in the mount of Assembly, the abode of the gods, in the

furthest recesses of the North—but he shall be thrust down into the deepest recesses of the Pit (v. 12-15).

(4) He is slain on the battlefield, where his people perish with him ; his body lies unburied save for the heaps of slain above it. Those who behold it moralise somewhat in the vein of Hamlet on Alexander, but with expressions of abhorrence (v. 16-20).—

Is this the man that made the earth tremble—that shook kingdoms,
That made the world as a wilderness—and destroyed its cities?
All the kings of the earth, all of them—lie in glory,
But thou art cast forth without a grave—like an abominable branch,
Clothed with the slain, those pierced with the sword—as a carcase trodden under foot.

The passage reflects the popular sentiments regarding the state of the dead. (1) Sheòl, the place of the dead, has no definite locality. The ideas formed of it are derived from the grave. It is a great abyss or pit, deep down under the earth or under the sea. It is the gathering place of all the dead, who are regarded as persons, and not called souls or spirits. (2) The ideas regarding the condition of the dead are derived largely from the dead body. The flaccid corpse suggests a feeble and nerveless existence. The condition of the dead is a shadowy reflection of life on earth. Those who were kings on earth still sit on thrones, from which they are roused by a flicker of excitement when any famous personage descends among them. (3)

Sheòl is not a place of rewards or punishments, neither is it divided into compartments having this meaning. All are there alike. But the state of the dead being a reflection of life on earth, any dishonour done to one on earth, such as being deprived of sepulture, may still cleave to him when he descends into the Underworld.

The above points are notions lying in the popular mind, they are not strictly scripture teaching, and appear to have almost no moral meaning. What the Old Testament *teaches* is that men's destinies after death are determined by their relation to God here. And the difference in their destinies does not lie in their having assigned to them different places or different lots in Sheòl, but in this that the righteous escape Sheòl. God shows them "the path of life," He "redeems them from the hand of Sheòl, and 'takes' them (Ps. xvi. 11; xlix. 15; lxxiii. 24); while death remains the lot of the wicked (Ps. xlix. 14). The Old Testament does not appear to speak of any aggravations in death; death itself and the state of the dead in Sheòl, as popularly conceived, is the highest aggravation.

25. **THE EVANGELIST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** (Isa. xl.-lxvi.).—This name has been given to the great prophetical author of Isa. xl ff., for these, among other reasons: *First*, on account of his clear statement of the idea of vicarious suffering, the bearing of the sins of the guilty by one himself innocent (Isa. liii.). *Secondly*, because of the compass of his religious conceptions. God's purpose of redemption is as broad as the world—"Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am

God, and there is none else" (xlv. 22, *cf.* xlii. 1-4, xlix. 6). And *thirdly*, because of his representations of the love and liquid compassion of the divine mind. God loves with more than a mother's love—"Can a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee" (xlix. 15 ff.). "I will not be always wroth, for the spirit would fail before me, and the minds which I have made" (lvii. 16, *cf.* xl. 1, xliv. 6, lxvi. 13).

(1) *The Situation.*—The prophet feels himself standing at the end of Israel's history—"her warfare is accomplished." He looks into the grave in which all her sorrows, the shame of her youth and the reproach of her widowhood—the afflictions of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon—lie buried. The night is spent, and all its uneasy dreams are fled—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" Only one event now remains to round off the life of Israel—her Restoration. And it is at the door. Babylon is not yet fallen, but the Medes are at the gates. And Babylon's fall is the fall of idolatry, and Israel's and the world's redemption. The long process at law called History is concluded, and Jehovah's cause is won. Israel's Restoration is her entrance upon her final blessedness, and the evangelizing of the world—the Lord feeds His flock like a shepherd, and all flesh together see his glory (xl. 5. 11).

(2) *Cyrus.*—When the prophet wrote, Cyrus was on the full tide of his victories, treading down rulers like mortar, so that he hardly needed to be named (xli. 2, 25 ff.). But he is also named, and the scope of his victorious career stated. The Lord leads him to his conquests (1) that he may know that it is the

God of Israel who inspires him and girds him (xlv. 3); (2) that Israel may be restored (v. 4); and (3) that they may know from the rising of the sun and from its going down that there is no God beside Jehovah (v. 6 ff.). The drama which the prophet sees being enacted on the stage of the world before his eyes is nothing other that Jehovah's bringing in of His universal kingdom on the earth. The operation has both an external and an internal movement. Externally, Cyrus overthrows Babylon, the idolatrous world, and restores Israel—"They are gone into confusion that are makers of idols; Israel is saved with an eternal salvation" (xlv. 16 f.). But the more profound inner movement is in the hand of the Servant of the Lord.

(3) *The Servant of the Lord.*—Scholars are not agreed on the subject of the Servant. There are two questions, which should not be confused. One is, In whom have the prophet's ideas of vicarious suffering and spiritual power been verified in fact? And the answer of all interpreters is, In Jesus the Messiah. This answer was given by the contemporaries of Christ, and it was given by His own consciousness. The other is, What subject had this prophet in his own mind when he spoke of the Servant? This question, though interesting, is of less importance. What is of moment is the prophet's ideas, which have enriched and deepened the religious thought of mankind. Suffering, from which men shrunk as the lowest, is seen to be the highest. Travail in pain enters also into redemption. It is the sympathy of spirit with spirit, the receiving and the giving—acceptance of evil and

bestowal of good—that accomplishes moral emancipation (2 Cor. v. 21). Besides bearing the sin of the people, the Servant transfuses his own spirit into them, and thus he becomes "a covenant of the people," the medium of uniting them again in covenant with their God.

26. THE FALL OF BABYLON.—The stories told by Classical and other writers, regarding the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, appear based on a mistake. They have transferred circumstances that took place under Darius to the time of Cyrus. Babylon twice revolted under Darius and was twice reduced by a siege, its fortifications being finally dismantled. But Cyrus entered the city in peace. The Tablet of Nabonidus is unfortunately broken, and becomes legible again (§ 23) only in his seventeenth year (539), the year in which Babylon fell. On this year it is said, "in the month of Tammuz (June) Cyrus gave battle to the army of Accad (N. Babylonia). The men of Accad broke into revolt. On the fourteenth day the garrison of Sippara was taken without fighting. Nabonidus flies. On the sixteenth day Gobryas (general of Cyrus) and the army of Cyrus entered Babylon without fighting. Afterwards, he takes Nabonidus and puts him in fetters in Babylon. On the third day of Marchesvan (October) Cyrus entered Babylon. He grants peace to the city; to the whole of Babylon Cyrus proclaims peace." The Cylinder inscription of Cyrus continues the narrative. Of Bel-Merodach, chief god of Babylon, it is said, "Cyrus, king of Elam, he proclaimed by name, for the sovereignity. To his city of Babylon he summoned his march; like a

friend and a comrade he went at his side. Without fighting or battle, he caused him to enter into Babylon." Cyrus proceeds, "The gods of Sumer and Accad, whom Nabonidus, to the anger of the lord of the gods (Merodach), had brought into Babylon, I settled in peace in their sanctuaries by the command of Merodach, the great lord." And Cyrus prays that all these deities, whom he had restored to their ancient shrines, may intercede before Bel and Nebo, that they may bless him and his son Cambyses, who are their worshippers.

CHAPTER III

THE RESTORATION

27. **SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE PERIOD.**—The sources of information for the Restoration and the subsequent period are the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and the three Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The chief events of the period in the order in which these Books present them, are the following:—(1) The Edict of Cyrus granting liberty of return to the captives. To the number of about 40,000, they return to Jerusalem and Judah, under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest, Zerubbabel, a scion of the house of David, having been appointed Governor by Cyrus (538-7). On their return they rebuild the altar of burnt-offering on its ancient site, and lay the foundations of the

Temple amidst a scene of rejoicing and weeping (Ezra i., iii.). (2) The building of the Temple, interrupted through the interference of the neighbouring populations, and suspended during the reigns of Cyrus and his son Cambyses, was recommenced in earnest in the second year of Darius (520), under the influence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and carried to completion four years after (516-15; Ezra. v., vi.). (3) A blank in the history now occurs for a period of nearly sixty years, in regard to which we have no information, with the exception of some allusions in Ezra iv. 6; and what inferences as to the past can be drawn from the prophet Malachi, who wrote probably toward the end of the period. (4) At the close of this period (458) a fresh band of exiles under the guidance of Ezra arrived at Jerusalem, Ezra being entrusted with a commission from Artaxerxes to settle the religious condition of the people in Judah (Ezra vii.-x.). (5) Another blank of thirteen years follows, at the end of which (445) Nehemiah, the cup-bearer of Artaxerxes, receives from that king the appointment of Governor of Judah, and arrives at Jerusalem. Having in a midnight ride round the city inspected the ruins, he energetically sets about rebuilding the walls, an undertaking which, in spite of much opposition from the neighbours of the people, he accomplishes in less than two months (Neh. i.-vii.). The completion of the walls appears to have been followed by a ceremony of Dedication (ch. xii. 27-43). (6) Somewhat later (in 444?) at a great convocation of the people the Book of the Law was read by Ezra in their hearing, and all

the people pledged themselves to obey it (Neh. viii.-x.). This was the introduction of the new Constitution. Some other regulations were rigorously enforced by Nehemiah, particularly the observance of the Sabbath (ch. xiii. 4-31).*

28. CYRUS.—No monarch of antiquity awakened such interest as Cyrus, both from his character and his exploits. Even in Greece history not only recorded his brilliant victories, but he himself became the hero of Romance, as in the Cyropædia of Xenophon. Cyrus was ambitious, bold and chivalrous; clement and considerate to the fallen princes over whom his arms had been victorious; and conciliatory towards the populations whom his conquests had given him for subjects. No butcheries stained his victories such as those too often perpetrated by Shemitic conquerors like Nebuchadnezzar. His three great adversaries, Astyages, Crœsus and Nabonidus were all spared by him, and either sent into honourable exile or, as tradition asserts in the case of some of them, made governors of provinces. He was sympathetic towards the national aspirations of his new subjects, and scrupulously regardful of their religious feelings. Out of respect to the sentiment of the Babylonians he restored the gods of the various ancient cities, which Nabonidus had carried to Babylon, to their native shrines and repaired their temples.

It was, therefore, in conformity with his character and policy that he should grant liberty to the Jewish captives to return to their home, and that he should rebuild the house of their God, and restore its sacred

* See final Note.

vessels. What Cyrus' own religion was is a point rather obscure, though, as he was descended from Teispes, it may have been that of Persia, notwithstanding that he was himself king of Elam. At any rate, Marduk (Bel) and Nebo, the deities of Babylon, must have been strange gods to him, and when he names Marduk supreme god one fancies that he is rather speaking the language of his subjects than his own, and that his religious professions are dictated more by policy and complaisance than by faith. And when he speaks of Jehovah as "the God of heaven," a title much used by the Jews of this age, it is possible that he merely adopts the language of Jehovah's worshippers. If he was a polytheist he may have supposed that each land and people had its own god, who was powerful in his own sphere and therefore to be conciliated,—the usual belief in those days; or if he believed in one god alone he may have deemed it prudent to consider Marduk and Jehovah but other names for the Deity he himself acknowledged.* The prophet of the Exile, who sees in Cyrus' unparalleled successes the hand of Jehovah preparing for the deliverance of His people and the coming of His kingdom among all nations, calls him Jehovah's "shepherd," His "anointed" and him whom He "loves," and ventures in the enthusiasm of his own faith to hope that the conqueror, hitherto an unconscious agent of Jehovah, will yet learn to whom it is that his victories are due, and become His

* In the Egyptian Inscriptions Cambyses and even Darius represent themselves as fervent worshippers of the native gods, whose temples they repair.

conscious worshipper, and by his example and his power bring all nations to the footstool of the true God.* He predicts also that he shall let go His captives and rebuild His temple. And Josephus relates that these and similar prophecies were brought before Cyrus and won for Israel his favour. There is nothing improbable in the Jewish historian's story. Another prediction, that Jehovah would give him Egypt and Ethiopia in recompense for his liberation of Israel, was partially verified in the days of his son, and more perfectly in the time of Darius, who incorporated Egypt as a province in the Persian empire (Is. xliii. 3 ; xlv. 14).

Cyrus was a soldier, and died a soldier's death. Though master of an empire greater far than Assyria or Babylon had ever known, he fell on the battlefield, fighting with some obscure and barbarous tribe. His dynasty was not destined to be permanent. His son Cambyses—altogether unworthy of such a father—though at first successful in his darling enterprise of subjugating Egypt, sustained such reverses in his attempt to invade Ethiopia that he was obliged to retreat, and died in Syria, it is supposed by his own hand. Previous to his Egyptian campaign he had secretly made away with his brother Bardes, and the male line of Cyrus' house was extinct. The crown, after some delay, passed to Darius, the representative of the Persian branch of the family (§ 23, note).

29. THE RETURN (Ezra i., ii. ; Neh. vii.).—"Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans ; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it

* Is. xliv. 28 ; xlv. 1 ; xlviii. 10 ; Comp. xli. 2 ff. 25 ff. ; xliii. 14 ff. ; xlv. 1-7, 13 ff.

even to the ends of the earth : say ye, the Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob" (Isa. xlviii. 20 ; *cf.* lii. 11). Such were the terms in which the great prophet of the Exile predicted the new Exodus from Babylon. Its history has been told by one who was less of a poet. The writer of Ezra i. is probably the same with the author of Chronicles, and writing two centuries after the event and with but scanty sources to draw from, and having few interests except in the Temple and its furniture (i. 7-11), his account is rather colourless.* The Edict of Cyrus is translated into Hebrew thought and expression. And no information was at his disposal regarding the route the exiles followed, nor the perils and adventures by the way, nor how long the weary caravan was on its journey, nor what emotions filled the breasts of the pilgrims when the mountains round Jerusalem came in sight. It is possible that the route pursued by the exiles was the shorter one up the Euphrates, but more probably it was the great trade-road along the Tigris and past the ruins of Nineveh ; then across Mesopotamia to Harran, the home of their first father ; from there to Carchemish, the ancient Hittite stronghold at the fords of the Euphrates, and from thence south by Aleppo, Hamath and Damascus to Jerusalem. Ezra's caravan was from three to four months on the way (Ezra vii. 8-9 ; viii. 31), and the time required by a company so many times larger would certainly not be less.

The ancient document preserved in Ezra ii. and

* The parts of Ezra due to the Chronicler himself are i., iii. 1—iv. 5 ; vi. 19-22. Chapter ii. is = Neh. vii. ; iv. 6—vi. 18 is from an Aramaic document ; and vii.-x. is mainly from Ezra's own Memoirs.

Neh. vii. states the number of those who returned at 42,360, but the items in Ezra amount to only 29,818, and in Neh. to 31,089. Even the lower number would be very large. If, as is usually supposed, only men were enumerated, the whole caravan would be 150,000 or 200,000 strong. This is not absolutely incredible, for Sennacherib states that he deported 200,000, small and great from Judah,* but it is very improbable. Most likely all *free* persons, men, women, and children, are included in the numbers, seeing they are contrasted with the bond-servants who numbered 7337 (ii. 65).† As is usual among emigrants the proportion of men to women would be great. Twenty years later Zech. viii. 5 seems to miss the sight of boys and girls playing in the streets of Jerusalem. And the mixed marriages that took place afterwards may have been partly due to the small number of women of pure Jewish blood.

Though those that returned belonged to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the movement was a national one. Those unable or disinclined to return contributed largely of their wealth. And to express the idea that the Restoration was national *twelve* leaders are expressly named, according to the number of the tribes (Neh. vii. 7). The family or clan and township organisations seem to have been kept up in the Exile, and probably most of the families furnished a contingent to the return, for the second company that came up with Ezra nearly

* Schrader, Cun. Inscrip. on 2 Kings xviii.

† The phrase "the number of the men of the people of Israel" (ii. 3) is probably general; in Ezra viii. the word "males" is used.

eighty years later (Ezra viii.) are drawn from the same families as are named in chap. ii. The priests who returned are reckoned at 4289, an extraordinarily large number; according to Neh. xi. 12-14 the priests settled in Jerusalem in his day were only 1192.

30. **FROM 537 TO 520.** (Ezra iii. 1—iv. 1-5).—The Edict of Cyrus was issued in his first year (538), and the Exiles would hardly make their preparations and accomplish their journey before the early part of the year following. Part of them settled in Jerusalem and the villages around, but others resorted to the cities in Benjamin and Judah from which they had been carried away.* In the seventh month, the month of the great feasts, the altar of burnt-offering was erected on its old site, not improbably the "rock" which gives its name to the modern mosque, "The Dome of the Rock." The feast of Tabernacles was celebrated, and from that time the continual daily burnt-offering was presented, and the stated feasts regularly kept.

Early in the second year of the Return, the foundation of the Temple was laid amidst shouts of joy and loud weeping which drowned each other, the young and hopeful rejoicing, the old, who remembered former glories amidst the ruins of which they stood, unable to restrain their tears. The Temple would be the first thought of the Exiles. All the people's hopes were centred in the House of God. Through the altar and sacrifices, indeed, the land was again sanctified and fellowship with Jehovah renewed and maintained, but their

* See the names of places in Neh. iii., vii., xi. 25-36; xii. 28 ff.

captivity was but half turned till Jehovah dwelt again in the midst of them in His house. It was His presence among them there that would sanctify them and be their final perfection as well as the revelation of His glory to all the nations (Ezek. xliii. 1-9; xlviii. 35; Isaiah lx.).*

It was not unnatural that the half-caste people inhabiting Samaria should desire to have part in the building of the Temple. They knew the Jews to be the genuine people of Jehovah the God of the land. Being themselves in Jehovah's land they had felt the need of knowing His "manner," that is, how He required to be served, and a priest had been sent to teach them (2 Kings xvii. 24-32). Their representation that they sought the God of Israel and sacrificed to Him, was in a sense true. They had been leavened with the religious ideas of the Israelites among whom for many years they had mixed, and, though with the retention of many heathen superstitions, they would be in the main worshippers of Jehovah. A hundred years later, when finally repulsed by the Jews, they erected a temple to Jehovah on Mount Gerizim.

While the Samaritans enlarged upon their own

* On account of the silence of Haggai and Zechariah regarding any work on the Temple prior to 520, the narrative in Ezra has been thought unhistorical. But (1) these prophets are merely *silent*, and the feeble beginnings of 536 may have been obliterated in the course of sixteen years. They are equally silent in regard to any opposition on the part of Persian officials (Ezra v., vi.). (2) In answer to the Persian officers the Elders represent the building as having been in progress since the time of Cyrus (Ezra v. 16). The slight colour they give to the facts by suggesting the continuity of the work since then was natural; but if there was nothing done under Cyrus, they simply lied. (*Cf.* Ezra vi. 3 ff.)

good side, the new colony had good reason to be apprehensive in regard to their evil side, and repelled their advances (*cf.* Neh. ii. 20). This awakened their hostility, and probably friction and reprisals ensued between the two communities. Zech. viii. 10, states that prior to 520 "there was no safety to him that went out or came in because of the adversary." Perhaps the people felt too weak to maintain a conflict with their neighbours, and abandoned the work which threatened to raise it. Other things contributed to slack their hand. The seasons were disastrous. The land had gone out of cultivation and refused to yield its increase; droughts prevailed (Hag. i. 11), and the scanty crops were blasted by mildew and beaten down by hail (Hag. ii. 17). There was no work for the labourer, "no hire for man, nor any hire for beast" (Zech. viii. 10). These things gave the people the feeling that the wrath of God was not yet removed from them (Zech. iii.), and their courage sank; they concluded that "the time had not yet come for the house of the Lord to be built" (Hag. i. 2).

31. **THE NEW TEMPLE, 520-516** (Ezra v., vi., Hag., Zech.).—The second year of Darius (520) was marked by the rise of Prophecy again among the people. Apart from their words the mere appearance of prophets helped the people to feel that their ancient life was renewed and their God again among them. The zeal of the people was awoke by the prophets, but to what was due the rise of the prophets themselves? The prophets usually catch their inspiration from great movements around

them in which they see Jehovah operating. Such events were at least not wanting. The transference of the crown to the Persian branch of the Achæmenians was the occasion of convulsions which threatened to shatter the empire in pieces. Babylon twice revolted. Even the hereditary provinces of Darius threw off their allegiance. Only the indomitable energy of the new ruler succeeded in restoring peace. Both Haggai and Zechariah refer to shakings among the nations which are imminent and which shall issue in the kingdom of the Lord (Hag. ii. 6 ; Zech. ii. 9).* Possibly other things helped to awaken new hopes. Though still depressed enough the people had had time to consolidate and feel more strength. In the two prophets the new title of High Priest appears, which points to some reorganisations in the ecclesiastical sphere. The Persian officials address themselves to the *Elders* (Ezra v. 9), and probably some civil ruling body had been established. The new colony was able to feel that it had taken root. Most of all, perhaps, they were encouraged by the hope that God's set time to favour Zion was come, for, in whatever way calculated, the expiry of the seventy years must be at hand. Allusion is made to this period more than once (Zech. i. 12 ; vii. 5).

Haggai.—In his exhortations Haggai first strives to awaken the people's conscience by pointing to the Lord's house lying waste, while they dwelt in ceiled houses themselves (i. 4). Then he protests that their disastrous seasons, so far from being as

* Zech. i. 11, 15, refers more to the attitude of the nations towards the people and Kingdom of God, to which they are indifferent.

they thought proof that the time to build the Temple was not come, were due to nothing but their slackness in this work. They were God's curse upon their labours for this cause; so soon as they put their hand to the work of His house He would bless them (i. 6-11; ii. 15-19; *cf.* Zech. viii. 10-13). And finally, in a parable from clean and unclean he touches the self-seeking and secularity which was at the root of their delay (ii. 10 ff.). The parable seems to mean this:—The faint aroma of sanctity, coming from their altar and sacrifices, was too indirect and feeble to affect or pervade the secular atmosphere of their life and circumstances—just as holy flesh carried in the lap will not sanctify what the lap touches; while on the other hand the work-a-day worldliness of their minds and life infected everything connected with them, defiling even their religious actions—just as one unclean from touching a corpse defiles even the holiest things when he comes near them. Under these appeals the people commenced the work on the 24th of the sixth month, and exactly three months later (Jan. 519) stone began to be laid upon stone in the Temple of the Lord. Haggai was supported by his younger and more ideal colleague Zechariah in a series of splendid visions seen and reported to the people two months later.

Hindrances.—The people were few, and their resources were small. The work, too, was of great magnitude, requiring sustained resolution and prolonged exertion. Then they had occasionally at least religious misgivings; they were not sure of themselves nor of the favour of their God (Zech. iii.,

v.). Moreover it needed but a few weeks' labour to reveal to them how little the new house would correspond to their ideals; compared to the first house it appeared "as nothing" in their sight (Hag. ii. 3). This crushing feeling is met by Haggai (ii. 1-9) with the assurance that this second house will yet greatly exceed in glory the first. The world is on the eve of great convulsions. Yet a little while and the Lord will shake the Kingdoms of the nations and they shall look unto Him and be saved, and then shall their "precious things," their silver and their gold, flow into His house, and the place of His feet shall be glorious (Is. lx. 13; *cf.* xxiii. 15-18).

Some other incidents that threatened to arrest the work are mentioned in Ezra v., vi. Tattenai, the Persian governor of the province on this side of the Euphrates, making a visit to the district of Judah, finds what apparently he had not heard of—a great House of God in course of erection. He asks the names of those responsible for the work, and the authority under which they are acting. The Elders reply that their authority is the Edict of Cyrus. Tattenai (a genuine Persian name) acts with perfect courtesy. Respect for the name of Cyrus and for the representations of the Elders restrains him from any interference with the work, but he feels that he must report the matter to the Court and ask confirmation of the allegations made to him. The Edict of Cyrus, sought for in vain at Babylon, is found among the state records in Ecbatana. The intention of the great founder of the empire was sacred in the eyes of Darius, and

he immediately confirms it in a rescript to the Governor, enjoining him also to aid the building of the House by a subsidy from the royal revenues. It is possibly these formidable external difficulties that Zechariah alludes to when he speaks of the "great mountain" in the way of Zerubbabel (iv. 7). Thus the Temple progressed unhindered, and was completed in the month Adar of Darius' sixth year (March 515), having been four and a half years in building. A feast of Dedication followed; and a little later the Passover was celebrated amidst much joy and thankfulness (Ezra vi. 15-22).

32. STATE OF THE PEOPLE'S MIND (Zech. i.-viii.).—The prophecies of Zechariah reflect his own ideas and hopes, but being directed to the state of feeling among the people, we may in some measure infer what this was.*

Sense of sin.—The depressed condition of the people reflected itself in their mind in the fear that their former defilement and that of the land had not yet been removed. They knew from the former prophets that their sin was twofold, chiefly sin in their ritual worship, but also sin in social and moral relations. The vision, ch. iii., reflects their evil conscience and fears in regard to ritual defilement and calms them. Joshua, the high-priest, clad

* Two things characterise these prophecies: first, the prophetic revelation, formerly given as *thoughts*, in the prophet's mind, is here made external, having two elements, visions and an angel who interprets them. And secondly, God himself also is manifested externally as the Angel of the Lord, and His intelligence and operations—that is, His Spirit—are symbolised as horsemen, etc. The *multiplicity* of symbols, horsemen, angels, etc., may be disregarded; they are in the main the Spirit of God, either as intelligent, or efficient or as the Spirit of Revelation.

in filthy garments, is accused by Satan. Satan is rebuked, and clean garments and a fair mitre put on Joshua. This signifies that the old uncleanness is removed and forgiven, and that the new ritual service is acceptable. This service with its ministers is but a type for a time; the Lord will bring in the Branch (Messiah) and remove the iniquity of the land in one day. The removal of social sins and sin itself is symbolised in the two visions ch. v.

Feebleness as a people among the nations.—The people was feeble and despised, still "a servant of rulers," and hated of mankind. It was in truth the "worm Jacob"—"a worm and no man" (Ps. xxii. 6). The vision ch. iv. is an answer to such feelings. The prophet sees a lampstand with seven burning lamps, each fed by a pipe from a reservoir of oil above the lampstand. On either side an olive tree distils its golden oil into the reservoir. The interpretation is, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," saith the Lord. The seven lamps are the seven spirits—the manifold Spirit of God, His intelligence and efficiency. They are called also His seven eyes, which go over all the earth. The Spirit of God pervades the world, controlling the movements of the nations in the interests of his people.* "If God be for us who can be against us?" Visions having a similar sense are ch. i., ii., vi.

Hopes connected with the House.—The perfection

* The olive trees, "the two oily ones" cannot well be Joshua and Zerubbabel. They probably have no meaning except to give symmetry to the symbol.

of men would be when God's Tabernacle was among them. His entry into His House would be the redemption of His people. He would remove the sin of the land in one day; the Messianic age would dawn and the House of David take the throne (Hag. ii. 23). And all nations would see His glory, and cleave to His people (Zech. viii. 18-23).

33. FROM 515 TO 458 (Malachi).—For nearly sixty years after the building of the Temple the history is a blank. Ezra iv. 6-23, in which some incidents of the reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and the early years of Artaxerxes are narrated, belongs in the main to the time after the arrival of Ezra. And of the internal condition of the people during this long period nothing is known except what may be inferred from Malachi, who wrote probably toward the end of the period.

Disillusionment.—The brilliant promises of Isa. xl ff. and Zechariah regarding the future of the people had not been fulfilled. The Temple was built, but the Lord had not returned to it in glory. Jerusalem, which was to teem with a population overflowing the country (Zech. ii.), remained waste and nearly empty. The nations, instead of being shaken and cleaving to Judah, continued at ease and indifferent, with their foot upon Israel's neck; and from their near neighbours the people encountered only ill-will and petty spite. The prophecies, being read literally, proved a heritage of woe. A reaction ensued, and the lofty enthusiasm of former days was succeeded by bitterness of mind and mockery (Mal. ii. 17, iii. 13 ff.). In truth the disillusionment was necessary. It was an education that must be passed through.

The people's faith was strong, but it was faith in a God who operated magically. "The Jews require a sign." Their religious expectations were external. Centuries of suffering and depression, and hopes deferred were needed to teach them that God might come though "not with observation"; and that He might dwell on the earth though not in glory, "with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Perhaps the nation never learned the lesson, but many meek souls all down the centuries did, and were able even amidst perplexities to say, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee" (Ps. lxxiii. 23). Comp. Mal. i. 6—ii. 9.

The people of the land.—Numbers of people had been left by the Chaldeans in the land of Judah, and these would continue to be worshippers of Jehovah, though perhaps without much zeal or purity. Whether they had any sanctuaries is uncertain. But the unoccupied places in the country had been filled by intruders from the neighbouring peoples, Ammonites, Arabians and others, and thus heathen elements were scattered about. There was room for all, and whether the strangers conformed, as was not unusual, to the religion of the land or not, the two parties would live on a friendly footing, and form family connections with one another (Neh. xiii. 23). A somewhat mixed population would thus arise. Moreover, after the Return, the men of position in the new community at Jerusalem and elsewhere, such as the head priests and other persons of property, would form similar connections with families of their own rank throughout the country, without raising nice ques-

tions of religion (Ezra ix. 1, 2). Both Tobiah the Ammonite and his son had Jewish women of rank for their wives (Neh. vi. 18, xiii. 4). The whole population in the country, new and old, thus tended toward coalescence. The stiff attitude taken up at first towards those outside was gradually relaxed. This was not done formally, but just from the drift of circumstances. Trade (Neh. xiii. 15), social intercourse and connection (*v.* 23), occupation in common of a small area of country hardly larger than a Scottish county—all these things threw the people together, and tended to produce a homogeneous population. And naturally, the religious warmth of the central body at Jerusalem was dissipated into the surrounding atmosphere, and the general religious temperature sank to a low level. There was a party however who looked on all this with a dissatisfied eye, and by-and-bye raised a strenuous protest against it. Comp. Mal. ii. 10-16.

34. THE PROPHET MALACHI.—Half a century of the processes just referred to resulted in the condition of the community described by Malachi. The great leaders Joshua and Zerubbabel had passed away and none had risen to take their place. The house of David had not been equal to its opportunity, and, producing no man of power to be head of the people, it sank out of sight. Such a blight came over the people that even loyalty to the dynastic idea died out under it. Indifference prevailed among all classes. The priests had not only lost zeal but faith. Their contempt for the altar of God was shown by their bringing blemished

victims for the daily burnt-offering. Such victims infringed the *holiness* of Jehovah (i. 13, 14); but more serious was the state of mind, the irreverence toward the great King, which they revealed (i. 6). The effect of the mixed marriages was the same. "Have we not all one Father?" cries the prophet. This is not an affirmation of God's universal fatherhood of mankind, but of His particular fatherhood of Israelites. Hence the mixed marriages were a profanation of His holiness; they introduced a heathen element among the people who entered into His presence to worship, for the foreign wife was "the daughter of a strange god."

Parties. — Malachi does not speak for himself alone, he is the mouthpiece of others also. During the past fifty years a cleavage has taken place which can be traced down all the subsequent history of Judaism. Two parties have arisen: one lax, ready to compromise principles, cosmopolitan and with no feeling of race, and therefore unsympathetic toward their poorer fellows (iii. 5); the other strict, trembling at God's word, strong in their sense of privilege and separation from the nations and in the feeling of the equality of all members of the community. In writings from this time downwards the former class are called "the wicked," and "the proud" (iii. 15), the other "the poor," "the meek," "the righteous," and "they that fear the Lord" (iii. 16 ff.). These party antagonisms recall the times of Elijah, and there is need that he should come again to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children and of the children unto the fathers, lest God smite the earth with a curse (iv. 4 ff.).

Ezra.

35. **HELP FROM BABYLON** (Ezra vii.-x.).—If the community of the Lord was not to lose its individuality and disappear among the surrounding peoples, and the precious treasure which it contained not be lost to mankind, two things were imperatively necessary: first, a reinforcement to the numbers and the spirit of the strict and faithful party; and secondly, the imposition of a new Law of worship and life which would create and continue to express a sharp distinction between the people and all around them. Both these needs were supplied from Babylon. The exiles in Babylon, so far as religion was concerned, were more happily situated than those at home. The distinction between them and the heathen around them was abrupt and absolute; compromise or coalescence was out of the question. The very sharpness of the antagonism threw the Jewish correligionists more closely together, and nursed and kept pure the flame of their faith.

Again, in a land where ritual service of their God was not a practical thing, scribes and others, enjoying wealth and leisure, were able to reflect on the worship of Jehovah and throw it into theoretical forms, so that it should fitly express the ideas which lay under it. The interest of the Babylonian exiles, however, in the ritual worship of Jehovah was more than theoretical, it was practical. All Judaism was one whether at home or in foreign lands. The God who dwelt in Jerusalem was God also of "those scattered abroad," and His service in His Temple

was shared in by them at least in spirit, and, at times of pilgrimage, in person, and was performed in their behalf as well as in behalf of those in the land. Their interest, therefore, in a pure worship was direct, and hence their desire to supply a perfect Law regulating it. We must consider the movement under Ezra as much a national one as that under Zerubbabel. The families from which Ezra's 1500 men were drawn were the same as those which furnished contingents to the first return. The gifts entrusted to Ezra for the Temple were of such value that the whole eastern Dispersion must have contributed to them. The negotiations between Artaxerxes and Ezra, and the Firman authorising him to introduce the Law (vii. 13, 14), show that the king regarded the movement as an act of the Jewish nationality. The Persian rulers took almost as much interest in the religions of the nationalities subject to their sway as in their political behaviour. They not only protected these religions, but subsidised them out of the provincial revenues, and bestowed rich personal gifts upon the temples. They desired to secure the favour of all the gods worshipped in their dominions (Ezra vii. 23). The monotheism of that age was not yet logical.

36. EZRA THE SCRIBE (Ezra vii.).—Ezra was of the great priestly family of the Zadokites. He is called a Scribe, that is, not a mere copyist, but a student, and it may be to some extent a systematiser of the Law. There is no reason to suppose that he was the author of it. His repute was great among his countrymen, and his fame may have reached the Court. Ezra was not a man of the world but an

ecclesiastic,—devout, emotional and impulsive ; one who, seeing the end to be reached, went at it by the shortest road, without waiting to reflect on the difficulties he might encounter, the susceptibilities he might wound, or the painful consequences which his action might leave. Experience taught him by-and-bye that to study the Law was one thing, but to handle the wills and affections of men and women another thing.

Unfortunately the earlier part of Ezra's memoirs, in which he may have described what immediately suggested his mission and what its precise object was, has not been preserved.* His mission was not political or civil like Nehemiah's, but purely religious —to bring gifts to the Temple and regulate its services, and to appoint officers to secure observance of the Law by those who knew it, and to teach it to them who were ignorant of it (vii. 25, 26). Mal. ii. 1-9 suggests that the people in general did not know the Law, but were dependent on the priests for instruction (*cf.* Hag. ii. 11). From Ezra's consternation when he heard of the mixed marriages (ix. 1-3) it may be inferred that this question was new to him. It absorbed his attention, however, immediately on his arrival, and the troubles connected with it caused his original purpose to introduce the Law to be postponed for a number of years.

37. **THE RETURN UNDER EZRA** (Ezra viii.).—The number of males who volunteered to accom-

* Only ch. vii. 27, 28, viii., ix. are in Ezra's own words. Ch. vii 1-10 belongs to the chronicler, and x. is merely based on Ezra's own narrative. The Hebrew colour of the Firman (vii. 11 ff.) is possibly due to the hand which influential men among the exiles had in its preparation.

pany Ezra was about 1500. With women and children the company would amount to several thousands. On assembling them at the river near Ahava (a place unknown) he found that there were no representatives of the Levites, nor of the Temple servitors among them. Contingents of both classes were secured from "the place Casiphia," the situation of which is also unknown. Twelve of the chiefs of the priests were selected to take charge of the rich gifts offered by the king and his counsellors and the people in exile to the Temple. The value of these offerings was enormous, amounting to near a million sterling.* After fasting and prayer for God's protection on the journey (for Ezra had so magnified the Providence of his God to the king that he felt ashamed to ask an escort) the caravan set out on the twelfth day of the first month (April 458), and arrived in Jerusalem three and a half months later. The distance travelled was from 800 to 900 miles.

38. **THE MARRIAGE QUESTION** (Ezra ix., x). —On the fourth day after his arrival Ezra weighed into the hands of Meremoth son of Uriah, the priest, the money and plate which he had brought for the Temple. As the High Priest took no part in this transaction, some have supposed that an instinctive antagonism existed from the first between Ezra and the priestly aristocracy, whether it was that the High Priest declined to acknowledge Ezra or that Ezra preferred to pass by the High Priest. But this is not certain. Shortly afterwards some of the

* Ryle, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, p. 110, gives the total as £957,250. Ed. Meyer (p. 69), calculating the talent differently, makes the amount somewhat over a quarter of a million.

princes—they would be of the stricter party—disclosed to Ezra the facts concerning the mixed marriages, adding that the rulers and priests were the first transgressors. In the ancient law (Ex. xxxiv. 16, Deut. vii. 3) marriage with the native tribes in Canaan was prohibited, and it appears to be this law which the Purists felt bound to carry out, for a number of Canaanite tribes are named with whom such connexions had been formed (Ezra ix. 1, 2). Few if any of these tribes any longer existed as distinct peoples, but they were represented by the heathen elements in the population, and by the nations around, the Ammonites, Moabites, Ashdodites and the Samaritans, and the principle remained the same. And when Malachi represented mixed marriage as a violation of the *holiness* of Jehovah, this was an extension of the principle which seemed to exclude marriage with the heathen of every sort.

The news drove Ezra to distraction: he rent his mantle and tore his hair, and sat in a stupor till the evening oblation. Curiosity drew a multitude about him; the curiosity grew to sympathy; and when at the evening oblation he fell on his knees and lifted up his voice acknowledging God's goodness in restoring the people (*cf.* Mal. i. 1-6), and lamenting how they seemed falling back again into the very sins which had caused the destruction of their fathers, the feelings of the people were so highly wrought that they were ready for any sacrifice. Shecaniah, son of Jehiel, gave expression to the general mind when he proposed that the foreign women should be put away. Whereupon Ezra rose

to his feet and made the priests and Levites and all Israel swear to take this course. A convocation of the people was summoned to meet in Jerusalem in three days. They assembled in the broad place beside the Temple, "trembling because of the matter and for the great rain" (it was December). Owing to the number of cases involved and the inclemency of the season a commission, presided over by Ezra, was appointed. The commission began its labours on the first of the tenth month, and by the new year its investigations were completed. The evil would seem not to have been so very wide-spread; only one hundred and thirteen persons are named as implicated, but possibly only prominent cases are reported.* It was a cruel and ruthless business, for "tears and weeping and sighing" (Mal. ii. 13) are apt to break out among heathen women, no less than among Israelites. The most that can be said is, that Ezra and those on the spot, seeing the drift of things, probably perceived what was necessary to be done more clearly than we can do.

But several things suggest the question how far Ezra's measures were successful. Ch. x. is not directly from his memoirs, and nothing more is heard of him till he is mentioned by Nehemiah twelve years later (xii. 36). No doubt Ezra's memoirs covered this period, but the Chronicler has suppressed them. What were his motives? He certainly takes every opportunity of magnifying

* The list consists of seventeen priests, including four members of the High Priest's family, ten Levites and eighty-six laymen. But almost all the families that came up with Zerubbabel were involved.

Ezra, and many writers have concluded that the narrative did not add to the great scribe's reputation; that it was a record of defeat and failure; that after the first ebullition of feeling opposition rose on reflection, and that it was found impossible to carry the reform through. Apart from the strange suppression of Ezra's records there is nothing in ch. x. that supports this view; though it is extremely probable that many who, in the enthusiasm of the crowd, gave their adhesion to Ezra's measures, found means of evading the application of them in their own particular case.

39. ATTEMPT TO FORTIFY JERUSALEM Ezra iv. 7-23).—Whether finally successful or not, Ezra's measures must have led to many painful incidents within the community and been the occasion of much bitter feeling, with the result of widening the breach already existing between the two parties among the people. They also exasperated the peoples around, whose chief men saw their sisters and daughters stigmatised as belonging to an inferior race and repudiated. This bitterness of those without coupled with the disloyalty of a party within was a grave danger to the community. Jerusalem was defenceless, lying open alike to the force and the fraud of those hostile to it. A resolution was formed to wall the town. The project originated, no doubt, with the reforming party, supported by Ezra's companions (iv. 12), and its object was to secure that exclusiveness in which they perceived their religious safety to lie. They may have feared the use of force against them, and if they did their apprehensions were justified (Ezra iv. 23);

but at any rate they feared the use of influences which would thwart them in their purposes, and they were resolved, as a writer puts it, "to be masters in their own house."

The moment, unfortunately, was not propitious. Persia was still engaged in her first great struggle with Greece, which lasted fifty years (499-449).* And in 460 a revolt had broken out in Egypt which taxed all the resources of the empire to put it down. The state of the West was such that the fortification of a strong place like Jerusalem could easily be placed in a suspicious light. The Persian officials, Rehum and Shimshai, instigated probably by the enemies of the Jews, and supported by the mixed races around Judah, hastened to make representations to the Court, as they felt it the duty of men to do who ate the king's salt. They dwelt on the former power of the kings of Jerusalem, and on the rebellious temper of the city, and predicted the loss of a province and its revenues to the empire if the fortifications were allowed to proceed. Artaxerxes, who is said to have been the handsomest man of his time, was a mild and generous prince, but facile and open to the latest influence brought to bear upon him. The representations of Rehum, however baseless in the particular instance, were not without plausibility, for a few years later Megabyzus, the satrap of Syria, who had suppressed the Egyptian rebellion, himself revolted, and was able to defy all the forces of the empire. It must be

* Marathon was fought in 490, Salamis and Thermopylæ in 480, and other events less famous followed during the reigns of Xerxes (485-465) and Artaxerxes (465-424).

borne in mind, too, that the fortification of the city, however naturally it arose out of Ezra's efforts, did not lie within his original commission. The result was that a royal edict suspended the operations at Jerusalem, at least until a further decree should be issued. Armed with this authority the Persian officials forcibly stopped the work, breaking down the walls already built, and burning the gates with fire (Neh. i. 3). Ezra is not named in connection with these events, though he was probably in Jerusalem, and for a number of years nothing is heard of him.

Nehemiah.

40. **NEHEMIAH** (Neh. i.-vi., xiii.).—The history of the next twelve years is a blank page. At the end of this period a new actor comes upon the scene in the person of Nehemiah, the son of Hacaliah. Nehemiah must have been wealthy; he refused all salary from the people during his governorship, and kept open house, entertaining daily as many as 150 chief men at his table (v. 14-19). His good family may have recommended him to Artaxerxes for the place of cup-bearer, an office much coveted even by the Persian nobility. And his honesty and force of character appear to have ingratiated him with the royal pair, and suggested to the king his fitness for the office of governor so soon as he solicited it.

Nehemiah is one of the most engaging personalities in the Old Testament, and the naive self-consciousness with which he dwells on his own characteristics and doings greatly adds to his attractiveness. He was self-contained and self-

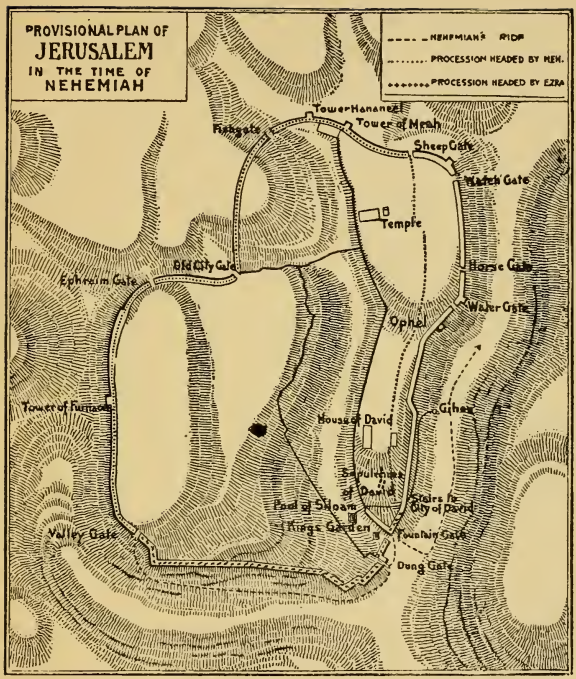
reliant, prompt in forming his resolutions, and determined and masterful in carrying them out. The moment he heard from his brother Hanani the deplorable condition of Jerusalem, his resolution was formed to seek leave from the king, though he had to wait several months for the opportunity (i. 1, ii. 1).* On his arrival at Jerusalem he took a nocturnal ride round the city to see its condition for himself, "Neither told I any man what my God had put it into my heart to do" (ii. 12). Characteristic are the phrases he uses—"I consulted with myself" (v. 7); "I contended with the rulers" (xiii. 11, 17); and equally characteristic were his dramatic gestures when heated with altercation—"I shook out my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house and from his labour that performeth not this promise" (v. 13). The Tyrian fishmongers, who exposed their wares on the Sabbath, he threatened, saying, "Why lodge ye about the wall? If ye do so again, I will lay hands on you" (xiii. 21). And the threat was not an idle one. Finding in the country places some rustics who had married women of Ashdod, he thrashed them and plucked off their hair (xiii. 25). It has been said by some one that Ezra, when driven to extremities, plucked his beard, while Nehemiah in like circumstances plucked other people's beards. He was certainly as vigorous in action as he was resolute in temper. During his absence in the East, whither he had been summoned by the Court, Eliashib the priest had put his relative Tobiah the Ammonite in possession of a chamber in the Temple

* The two dates must belong to different years.

precincts; Nehemiah, hearing of this on his return, forthwith threw Tobiah's furniture into the street, and restored the chamber to its sacred uses (xiii. 4 ff.). And a grandson of the High Priest having married a daughter of Sanballat, Nehemiah disposed of him in a way quite as succinct as his description of it—"I chased him from me" (xiii. 28). This incident had important consequences. The fugitive priest, Manasseh by name, betook himself to his connections in Samaria, and as all hope of coalescence with the Jews and of access to their Temple was now cut off, he appears to have organised the Samaritans into an independent religious community. Somewhat later a temple was erected on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans accepted the Pentateuch and a form of the book of Joshua. The Jews regarded them with contempt, which they were not slow to repay. They are still represented by a small community in Nablus; in 1888 they numbered 165 souls.*

41. NEHEMIAH'S NOCTURNAL RIDE (ii. 12 ff.).—The picture drawn by Nehemiah of himself in ch. i., ii., his unaffected piety, his ardent love for his nation, the mixture of simplicity and calculation displayed by him to attract the king's attention, and throw upon him the first step in opening the grave subject lying near his servant's heart—this picture is beyond a modern pencil. Nehemiah was a layman, and, though devout, his piety was robust and without any fanaticism. Unlike Ezra he required an escort of cavalry, besides letters of safe-conduct to the governors through whose districts he had to

* *Quarterly Statement*, Jan. 1888.



NOTE.

The valley running down the centre of the city is the Tyropœon; that on the south of the city, the valley of Hinnom; and that on the east, the Kedron. The processions led by Ezra and Nehemiah are represented as walking *on* the walls; the language is rather ambiguous. Much must remain uncertain till a final estimate is made of the excavations of Dr. Bliss. See note on p. 103.

pass. Apart from its necessity, the squadron of horse was becoming the dignity of one who was an imperial envoy, and came into the country with nothing short of the powers of a Dictator.

After a rest of three days Nehemiah resolved to inspect the state of the walls for himself, unknown to all but a few, and without revealing his ulterior intentions to anyone. Mounted on an ass or mule, and under an eastern moon, he passed outside the walls by the Valley Gate, rode eastward along the south side of the city for 1000 cubits to the Dung Gate, and from there a short distance further to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, about the S.E. angle of the walls. Here the fall of stones and rubbish had been so great that the beast under him could go no further. Dismounting he clambered on foot some distance northward along the Kedron valley E. of the city. Having satisfied himself he returned to his beast, retraced his way along the south wall, and re-entered the town at the Valley Gate by which he had come out.*

42. BUILDING OF THE WALLS (Neh. iii.). —Though there were many who had no good-will to the work, such as some of the priests and the nobles who had formed connexions with those outside, the zeal and authority of the Governor compelled all parties to unite in building. The circuit

* If Nehemiah's wall included the S.W. hill (the modern Zion) the Valley Gate must have lain toward the W. end of the south wall. The alternative is to suppose it a gate in a wall running down the Tyropœon, and situated in that valley. In an old wall, considerably outside the present south wall, Dr Bliss has laid bare three gates, which Prof. T. F. Wright would identify with the Valley, Dung, and Fountain Gates of Nehemiah.—*Quarterly Statement*, Apr. and Oct. 1896; *Journ. of Bib. Literature*, 1896.

of the walls was divided into forty to fifty sections. Some of these sections were undertaken by families; some by guilds, such as the goldsmiths and apothecaries, and some by the inhabitants of neighbouring towns, such as Tekoa and Gibeon. In some instances individual citizens repaired sections opposite their own houses, while several parties appear to have undertaken double portions.

The line of description, starting at the Sheep Gate, runs along the north, down the west, along the south, and up the east walls. The sheep gate must have lain near the Temple, not far from the N.E. angle of the walls, but whether in the east or north wall is doubtful. The various points mentioned can be traced on the Plan.* The section of wall from the Valley Gate to the Dung Gate, 1000 cubits in length (iii. 13), appears to have suffered little, as a single party repaired it. On the other hand, the east wall along the precipitous Kedron valley was greatly broken down, and a number of parties were employed on it. The stairs from the City of David (the southmost part of the Temple hill) probably descended on the W. side into the Tyropœon, and not into the Kedron.

43. OPPOSITION OF THOSE OUTSIDE (Neh. iv.).—The news of Nehemiah's arrival had awakened the jealousy of Sanballat and Tobiah and other adversaries of the Jews: they "were grieved that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (ii. 10). When the building of the wall came to their ears they brought out the

* The plan, after Stade and others, is only provisional, as all plans must be in the meantime.

bogey which had done service before: "Will ye rebel against the king?" (ii. 19). Nehemiah reminded them that they had no portion nor right in Jerusalem. At home together, and before the Samaritans, the two worthies became facetious, Sanballat at the expense of the Jews' piety: "What do these feeble Jews? Will they leave it with God? Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day?" and Tobiah at the expense of their feebleness: 'That which they build if a fox but so much as jump upon it he will break down their stone wall." Finding that their wit, however inimitable, did not keep the walls from rising, they meditated recourse to force; but Nehemiah's friends in the country keeping him alive to their movements, he made such preparations to receive them that they judged it wise to pause. His graphic story has made "Sword and Trowel" a catchword to this day.

44. INTERNAL TROUBLES (Neh. v.)—The accumulation of rubbish was so great that its removal in baskets severely taxed the strength of the labourers. Moreover, as the people gave their labour gratis and were retained within Jerusalem, they had no time to attend to their own small plots and vineyards, nor any means of earning wages to meet the Persian tax-gatherer. The consequence was that they had to borrow money from the richer Jews, to mortgage their small holdings, and even to let their children go into bondage. This state of things outraged their sense of justice: though poor they had the same feelings for their children that their richer brethren had for theirs; the sacrifices they made were for a common cause, and should

not be allowed to end in their impoverishment; therefore they demanded food: "Let us get corn that we may live." When these oppressive practices of the richer Jews come to the Governor's ears he was infuriated. He called an assembly, at which he made the usurers swear that they would cancel the mortgages and remit the 12 per cent. of interest they had been exacting. He held up the sacrifices he himself had made as an example for the rich to follow, and with a dramatic gesture he invoked a curse on all who failed to observe their promise (v. 13).

45. COMPLETION AND DEDICATION OF THE WALLS (Neh. vi., xii. 27-43).—In spite of the intrigues of Sanballat and his friends and the traps they laid for Nehemiah, both in the country and in Jerusalem, into which he was too astute to fall (ch. vi.), the walls were completed and the gates hung by the 25th Elul (Sept. 445), the work having occupied only fifty-two days. A feast of Dedication was held, probably shortly after, at which the people and the gates and the wall were purified by sacrifices (xii. 30). A ceremony, something like "riding the marches," was performed. Two companies, starting from the Valley Gate, went in procession round the walls; one company, led by Ezra, went eastward along the south wall, by the Dung and Fountain Gates, to the Stairs of the city of David, at which point they appear to have gone within the east wall, and so northward. The other company, led by Nehemiah, went up the west wall, passing the Tower of the Furnaces and other points, then along the north wall by the Fish Gate, onward to the

Sheep Gate. The two companies met each other at the Temple. Measures were also taken by Nehemiah to increase the population of the city (Neh. xi. 1, 2).

46. **INTRODUCTION OF THE LAW** (Neh. viii., ix.).—The walls having been finished and dedicated, and measures taken for the defence and peace of the city, it was felt that the time was come for realising Ezra's original purpose to introduce the Law. On the first day of the seventh month (probably 444), all the people assembled in the broad place beside the Water Gate. When Ezra, mounted on a wooden pulpit, and having seven priests on either hand, opened the Book, all the people stood up; and when, before reading, he prayed and blessed the Lord, the great God, they responded with loud Amens, lifting up their hands and throwing themselves on the ground in obeisance. His reading continued from morning till midday, in small sections, which the Levites, dispersed among the crowd, repeated and explained. When the words of the Law were heard, the people wept, stricken in their hearts, but Nehemiah and Ezra and the Levites stilled and comforted them, exhorting them to make the day a day of joy, to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them that were destitute.

Next day the reading was continued before the heads of houses. The portion lighted on or selected related to the Feasts, and gave instructions for keeping the Feast of Tabernacles (booths). This feast was accordingly celebrated on the fifteenth day, according to the prescriptions of

the Law (Lev. xxiii.), as it had not been since the days of Joshua. The twenty-fourth was kept as a day of fasting and confession. The people's confession of sin, in which they were led by the Levites, was a national one, in which they acknowledged their backsliding all down their history (Neh. ix. 5 ff.).*

47. A NATIONAL COVENANT (Neh. ix. 38; x.). —As in the days of Josiah the people entered into a covenant to keep the newly found law of Deuteronomy, so now they covenanted to observe the completed Law—the Pentateuch. The signatories, representing the princes, the priests and Levites, and the people, who set their hand to the deed, are given by name. It is somewhat strange that Ezra's name is not among them. The ordinances to which they pledged themselves were not exhaustive of the Law, but merely those of importance for the time. They are such as abstinence from marriage with the heathen, keeping holy the Sabbath, the contribution of the third of a shekel for the maintenance of temple and altar, the tithes, first-fruits and other dues to the priests and Levites.

Judaism.

48. HISTORY.—The period subsequent to the people's acceptance of the Law is usually called Judaism. It has little history during the Persian age. At the Return the internal governing body was already (as it continued to be) a council of elders,

* The LXX puts the confession into Ezra's mouth.

in which Joshua and Zerubbabel were the most important personages. Zerubbabel was Governor, representing the Persian power and responsible to it for the conduct of the people. After him no member of the Davidic family held this place; possibly the hopes of the people connected with him may have led to an alteration in the Persian policy. The decline of the Davidic house gave room for a corresponding advance in the power of the High Priest. In the time of Malachi, the governor was a foreigner (i. 8). In Ezra's days there was no governor, the district of Judah being subordinate to that of Samaria. When Nehemiah was recalled to Susa he left his place vacant, and on his return resumed it. Whether any governor was appointed after him is uncertain. Probably the High Priest became representative of the people in their relations with the empire.

Under the constitution of the Law, and when the Samaritans had been finally shaken off, the community felt so strong and compact that it was able to face without fear the problem of the "people of the land." All danger of its being overwhelmed by an inrush of Pagan elements was now over, and the religion of Israel was free to reveal the comprehensiveness and the universalistic impulse inherent in it as the religion of the one true God. Gradually all the inhabitants of Judæa were absorbed into the community. The central historic sanctuary exerted its attraction on Galilee and the region beyond Jordan, and both became one in faith with Judæa. Eventually, though not till long after, even the Edomites were brought into the house of Israel. And it

was more hereditary prejudices and local jealousies than any difference of faith that kept the Samaritans apart (John iv.).

Notwithstanding the reforms of Ezra and the imposition of the Law, the cleavage of parties among the people (§ 34) was not overcome, but continued to show itself all down the history. The political and cosmopolitan party, represented in Ezra's time by the priestly aristocracy, continued to be influential, and in the latest times survived both in its principles and in its name in the Sadducees (Zadokites); while the stricter party who followed Ezra, though undergoing transformations and bearing various names, appears finally as the Pharisees ("the separated"), with whose principles, naturally, the Scribes, the literary heirs of Ezra, agreed.

49. IDEA OF THE LAW.—The novelty of the Law imposed by Ezra did not lie in its contents, which were ancient, but in its systematic form, and in the fact that it was made known to the people and accepted by them as the rule of their life. The idea of the Law is really its idea of God—His holiness, and the corresponding idea of the people—their holiness. But holiness whether in God or man embraces many more elements than moral purity. In the extra-ritual Books and the prophets God is conceived as a moral ruler and judge, who punishes sin, moral and civil wrong, or forgives it freely of His mercy. In the ritual Law He is a pure sensitive nature which is disturbed by all human impurity in those who worship Him or among whom He dwells, —for the Law regards Israel not as a nation but as a worshipping congregation—and this human im-

purity must be removed by ablutions or atoned for by sacrifices.

The ideas of the age both of God and people are to be gathered more easily from Ezekiel's Temple legislation (xl.-xlviii.) than from the multifarious precepts of the ritual Books. *First*, the idea of God, of His holiness, is graphically expressed by the place of His abode, the holy of holies, being withdrawn far back from men, and by the multitude of barriers—the Temple wall, the outer and inner courts, the porch and holy place of the House —erected between Him and all impurity. And *secondly*, the people is conceived by Ezekiel as restored, forgiven and regenerated (xxxvi. 25 ff.). The errors and impurities into which they may fall are human inadvertencies, and for their atonement the sacrifices are provided. Now the ritual Law accepts this ideal view of the people and of the use of sacrifice. The ritual sacrifices and washings therefore do not *procure* salvation—any more than Christian worship and confession procure redemption—at most they conserve it. If therefore keeping of the Law was ever thought to merit justification, such a view would not arise for centuries after Ezra.

By the prophets only that which is moral was regarded as affecting the Deity, but among the priests and people, as in all antiquity, many acts, not strictly of a moral character, were considered obnoxious to His holiness. Now it might seem strange that at this late time the authors of the new constitution did not adopt the pure moral ideal of the prophets, and exclude the so-called Ceremonial.

Neither they, being priests, nor the people were ripe for such a thing. But they did this—they so arranged and purified the ritual that it embodied the prophetic conceptions. For the Law had a negative meaning—it passed judgment on the whole former history of the people in worship and morals, and made a return to it for ever impossible. In its own way it proclaimed as loudly as the prophets did that the essential things in religion were morality and monotheism. The ancient ritual worship at the high places had been the door through which heathenism, with its gross immoralities, entered the life of the people; the aim of the Legislation from Deuteronomy downwards was to make the ritual a safeguard against heathenism.

50. INFLUENCE OF THE LAW.—The law consists of two elements—the public ritual of worship, and the ordinances binding on the individual. The former was the worship of the community, and the atonement for their sin, for two things are now characteristic: *first*, private sacrifice is little practised, and *secondly*, the atoning side of sacrifice attains great prominence. Except at the feasts the private person took little interest in the sacrifices, and even then, little interest in their details. He was content to know that they were ordinances of God, instituted for His worship, and for the atonement of the sins of the people, of which he was one. "The emotion with which the worshipper approaches the second temple, as revealed in the Psalms, has little to do with sacrifice, but rests rather on the fact that the whole wondrous history of Jehovah's grace to Israel is vividly and

personally realised as he stands amidst the festal crowd at the ancient seat of God's throne, and adds his voice to the swelling song of praise."*

It is probable that the artificial purifications imposed on the individual sat lightly on the ordinary Jew. The general injunctions of the Law were observed by him—such as circumcision, the Sabbath, the passover, the great feasts, the laws of food, and such like things—but he was not very sensitive in regard to defilements, except, perhaps, when he personally appeared before God in His house. So far as he felt the rules obligatory, they brought God and His will into his daily life. When he neglected them they awoke his sense of sin. And on the other hand, no doubt, when he punctiliously performed them, as he might do, seeing they were external acts, they may, as in later times, have nourished his self-righteousness.

51. THE SYNAGOGUE.—Of greater importance in the religious life of the Jew than the Law was the Synagogue with its services. The Synagogue was the natural outcome of the Sabbath rest, with its religious meaning, and in its beginnings was as old as the Exile. In Palestine, and in the Dispersion, Synagogues arose on the spots where religious conventicles were held for prayer, at which "they that feared the Lord spake one with another" (Mal. iii. 16). The services were similar to those in the Christian Church, for which, indeed, they furnished the model. They consisted of prayer and praise, reading of the Scriptures, exposition, and exhortation. The Law had no undue

* Robertson Smith, *Jewish Church*, p. 379.

prominence, being divided into such sections that the whole was undertaken in three years, and along with the Law sections from the Prophets, and other writings, were also daily read. The Synagogue was a lay institution ; the sermons were moral and practical, and anyone who felt he had a word of exhortation for the people was free to say on. Through these Sabbath readings the mind of the people was enriched with the religious principles of the great prophets, and animated and upheld with their hopes regarding the future of the Kingdom of God and the world.

52. **THE SCRIBES.**—The type of the original scribe was Ezra, and those Levites who explained the Law to the people when read by him. They were persons versed in the Scriptures, collectors and editors of the precious fragments of the ancient literature, in a word, the *literati* of the time. Their aims were practical, they were the religious instructors of the people in synagogue and school. Though at first drawn from the clergy, they were in later times chiefly laymen. As the nation had no public or political life, the only occupation for men's intellect was study of the Law and other literature. It was not till much later that the Scribes became the legal casuists familiar in the Gospels. And in general we must beware of identifying the Judaism of Ezra's time and the centuries which followed with the official Judaism reflected in the New Testament.

Note.

A keen controversy over the events connected with the period of the Return has been raised by a little work of Prof. Kosters of Leiden, called the "Restoration of Israel." The points which he attempts to substantiate are these:—(1) There was no return of exiles in the time of Cyrus, and of course no foundation of the Temple in his reign. (2) The Temple was built in the reign of Darius, not by returned exiles, but by the people who had been left in the land by Nebuchadnezzar; Zerubbabel and Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah were natives, not returned exiles. (3) The return of Ezra and his band of exiles did not precede but followed that of Nehemiah. (4) Nehemiah, appointed Governor in 445, restored the walls of Jerusalem solely by the exertions of those who had been left in the country, for no exiles had yet returned. (5) It was under the influence of Ezra that Nehemiah, who was a layman, and interested only in the external welfare of the people, used his authority to impose religious reforms.—The question has been discussed by various writers in the *Theolog. Tijdschrift* of Leiden, by Wellhausen in the *Götting. Nachrichten*, and in two special works, Eduard Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judenthums*, and Hoonacker, *Nouvelles Études sur la Restauration Juive*.

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